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# JESUS OF THE EVANGELISTS:

HIS HISTORICAL CHARACTER

VINDICATED;

OR,

AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR

OUR LORD'S DIVINE MISSION

WITH REFERENCE TO MODERN CONTROVERSY.

BY

THE REV. C. A. ROW, M.A.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S: AUTHOR OF "CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES" VIEWED IN RELATION  
TO MODERN THOUGHT," "THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT," ETC.

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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It has been often objected to Christianity that the truth of our Lord's divine mission rests on a miraculous attestation ; and that the weight of such an attestation is diminished in force by the mere lapse of time. Even if we admit the possibility of miracles, they cannot afford the same evidence to us, who are separated by an interval of upwards of eighteen centuries from the events, which they might have afforded to those who witnessed them. It may be conceded that few at the present day would hesitate to admit that a person who was able by a word to summon from the grave one who had been dead for several days, or to communicate by a touch the power of vision to one who was known to have been born blind, was entitled to all credence if he asserted that he possessed a divine mission. Amidst the endless discussions about the possibility of miracles, or the degree in which they can attest a divine commission, few persons would feel themselves able to resist evidence of this kind, if it were actually submitted to their senses. But, knowing as we do the tendency to invent fictitious miracles, we have to arrive at a belief in the reality of those recorded in the Gospels through a long course of historical proof, and a minute inquiry into their character and evidence. This evidence, from its very nature, is probable and

moral only, and does not admit of demonstration. It must therefore be conceded that the evidence of miracles is less convincing now than it would have been if we had lived at the time of their actual performance.

But there is another branch of the evidence of our Lord's divine mission which is rather strengthened than weakened by the lapse of ages, viz., the superhuman glories of his personal character. As the Gospels present us with a distinct and palpable portraiture of this, we are as able to form a judgment respecting it as his contemporaries. According to the statements of the fourth Gospel our Lord frequently appealed to it in proof that his mission was divine. The only difference of position in which we stand as compared with those who held familiar intercourse with him is, that we have a portraiture of his divine person, character, and work, which the latter beheld with their eyes. The only point needful for us to determine, in order that we may occupy the same position as the witnesses of our Lord's life and actions is, whether the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists is an historical one, or one which has been falsely attributed to him. Our means of arriving at a conclusion on this point do not diminish with the lapse of time. The progress of mental and historical science has enabled us to determine with certainty the law of the development of the human mind. Increasing light has been thrown on the state of mind of the Jewish people when Christianity originated.

The progress of science and of history alike enables us to judge whether it is possible that the Jesus of the Evangelists can be a mythical or ideal creation.



If he was an historical reality his divine mission is established.

It is the object of the following pages to set forth this portion of the evidences of the truth of our Lord's divine character in reference to the controversies of the present day. Believers and unbelievers are alike agreed that the divine origin of Christianity must stand or fall with the historical reality of our Lord's person and action as they are exhibited in the Jesus of the Evangelists.

However valuable are former works on the evidences, they were written with a view of answering objections to the truth of Christianity of a different character from those of the present day: modern unbelief attempts to evaporate the Gospels into a number of mythic stories which, however honestly intended, are essentially unhistorical. These views can hardly be said to have been in existence when the great works on Christian evidences were composed. They were designed for a different order of objections, and therefore we need not be surprised if they fail to meet some of the requirements of the present time.

The present work assumes only two facts, the truth of which it is impossible to deny, viz., the existence of the four Gospels, and that they contain a portraiture of our Lord. This is not a matter of theory, but of incontrovertible fact, and is not affected by any number of inaccuracies which criticism may suppose that it discovers in the Gospels themselves. Whether they are or are not accurate as histories the portraiture is there.

If we can prove that this portraiture cannot be an

ideal or mythical creation we have established its historical character. If it be historical its origin must have been divine.

Against this conclusion no amount of objection against the details of the Gospels can possibly avail. If we assume that great discrepancies or inaccuracies of historical statement exist in them, still the portraiture is there. The question is, how did it get there? The greater the imperfection of the materials in which it is imbedded, and of the historical medium through which it has been transmitted to us, the stronger is the proof that it rests on a divine foundation. Otherwise it would never have survived the imperfection of human elements by which it is surrounded.

The following work is therefore addressed exclusively to the examination of the question of the possibility of the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists resting on anything but an historical foundation, and to the demonstration of the total inadequacy of any other theory to account for its existence.

The author, therefore, has thought it quite unnecessary to discuss all the various objections which may be brought against the Gospels. Had he attempted to do so the present work must have been expanded into several volumes. The two subjects are entirely distinct, and the argument would not be affected even if the bulk of those objections were not merely apparent but real.

The reader will observe that between certain passages of Mr. Liddon's Bampton Lectures and of the following work there are some similarities of thought. The two works are upon entirely different subjects,

and not unfrequently, even on points common to each, present no inconsiderable divergency of opinion. Still on many points connected with the Gospels, and the views which they present us of the Person of our Lord, it is evident that the author and Mr. Liddon have arrived at the same conclusions. The author, therefore, feels it due to himself, and to Mr. Liddon, either to acknowledge his obligations to the Bampton Lectures, or to declare his entire independence of them. The latter is the fact. He had not seen the Bampton Lectures, and knew nothing of their contents until the whole of the present volume was in manuscript except the last two chapters. The points where the resemblances are to be found were all written considerably prior to the publication of Mr. Liddon's work. The reader who has perused the author's previous work on Inspiration will find there nearly all the common points in embryo, or more definitely expressed. The coincidence is singular; but it owes its origin to the circumstance that two minds whose theoretical views on some points differ widely have arrived independently of each other at precisely the same conclusions respecting several of the facts presented by the Gospels.

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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IN responding to the demand for a second edition of this work, my prefatory remarks shall be brief. The corrections, although numerous, are almost entirely verbal. Every sentence which was not necessary to give perspicuity and force to the argument has been expunged ; but the number of these has been far less than was anticipated, amounting altogether to only a few pages. The argument remains intact. The reason why no other alterations have been made is, that the numerous critics of the former edition have failed to show that my reasonings are inconclusive in any of their main outlines. The reader should observe that one great principle underlies the entire work. Whatever theory may be propounded as to the nature and origin of the Gospels, it is a simple fact that they contain four delineations of the same great character, which, although taken from four different points of view, present a substantial unity in all their principal features. This unity is a fact which demands to be accounted for. The theory that they are four portraiture of the same historical character, taken from the life, affords a rational account of it. The theories of those who deny the reality of the Gospel narratives assume that they consists of a mass of mythic and legendary matter, combined, it may be with a few grains of

historical truth, or that they have been gradually evolved by a number of discordant sects into which the primitive Christian society was originally divided, but in course of time became fused into a unity called the Catholic Church ; and that out of such materials, the creations of a number of independent minds, the authors have created the perfect character of the Jesus of the Evangelists ! These theories it is the object of the present work to disprove ; and, so far as I am aware, no attempt has been made to show that its reasoning is unsound, for among the various works which have appeared since its first publication for the purpose of proving that the Gospels are unhistorical, I have not met with one that has attempted to grapple with the fundamental points of the argument ; and it has been found more convenient to pass them over in silence than to answer them. Yet, unless it can be shown that it was possible to have constructed this great character in conformity with the principles of those against whom I am contending, the theories which have been propounded by unbelieving critics to account for the origin of the Gospels fall to the ground. I need only refer to one great authority, who once held a high place among modern unbelievers, the late Mr. J. S. Mill, who in his posthumous essays treats with something like scorn the idea that the moral elements of the character of the Jesus of the Gospels can have been the creation of his immediate followers : it was so infinitely above them. Such was the opinion of this acute reasoner. Why, then, do not those critics to whom I have alluded, instead of occupying themselves with conjectural criticisms, show that this position

is invalid? One point, however, Mr. Mill has clearly overlooked: he affirms that it is possible that the followers of Jesus were the inventors of all the super-human elements in his character. Yet not only are these indissolubly interwoven with the other portions of it, but they bear the same moral impress as those to which Mr. Mill refers. If therefore the invention of the one was above their conceptions, it must have been equally beyond their power to have invented the others.

22, HARLEY ROAD, SOUTH HAMPSTEAD.

*April, 1880.*



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# THE JESUS OF THE EVANGELISTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

THE most important question of theological discussion in the times in which we live respects the historical reality of the person of our Lord. Compared with this all other subjects of religious thought sink into insignificance. The great religious controversies of bygone ages have respected dogmas which different orders of minds, according to the variety of their conformation, have pronounced more or less essential to the Christian faith. Many of these have become extinct, others are in process of extinction, yet the Christian faith still exists. But in this question is involved the life of Christianity itself. It is nothing less than has the Church a Christ, or has she been believing in an idea which never had an historical existence?

The whole tone of earnest religious thought is steadily making an effort to form a distinct appreciation of the person and character of our Lord. Religious minds are rising to a clearer perception that he is the rock on which the Church is built, and that Christianity is not founded on speculative principles, but on an appreciation of him as a living life and a spiritual power. The older forms of theological metaphysics and dogmatic speculation are felt to be barren, uncertain in their evidence, and unsatisfying to the wants of man. An increased inquiry into the nature of speculations which once possessed the deepest religious interest, has produced the conviction that their solution lies beyond the powers of the mind; and that dogmas, whose solution is impossible, and the very terms of which we are unable even to conceive, can be no essential portion of the Christian faith.

The progressive advance of science has raised questions which have hitherto been considered as belonging to the

exclusive province of the theologian. The answer to them may be delayed, but cannot ultimately be evaded. She is gradually shaking many long-accepted dogmas to their centre.

As Christianity professes to be founded on a series of historical events, the science of historical criticism has claimed the right of investigating their nature and character. This claim it is impossible to refuse to concede.

Thus extensive provinces, where once the theologian reigned with sovereign sway, have become wholly transferred to the domains of science, or she has asserted her right to a joint occupation of them.

A large number of critics have for a long period been applying the utmost resources of powerful intellects to the investigation of the historical foundation of both the Old and New Testaments. Many of these have been animated by feelings avowedly hostile to the Christian faith. It is time that those to whom Christianity is dear should no longer concede the undisputed dominion of this realm of science to its opponents.

It were useless to deny that questions of the deepest interest have been started in connection with both Testaments, questions which very intimately affect the foundation of Christianity, and the ultimate refusal to entertain which is impossible, while the delay of doing so is dangerous to the faith of multitudes. On these subjects earnest minds are longing for light.

In this country the popular interest has hitherto been chiefly concentrated around the difficulties connected with the Old Testament, its historical character, the authenticity of its various books, the relation in which it stands to scientific thought, its inspiration and its moral character. On the Continent the controversy has assumed its highest interest around the New Testament, and the person of our Lord. It is useless to expect that the same spirit at home will long continue to respect its pages. In fact the battle has commenced already, and is engaging the attention of all earnest minds.

Still we can afford to wait until greater light is thrown on the subject, if we can only find firm ground for our faith in the historical reality of the divine person of our Lord, as he is depicted in the Evangelists. We may even

concede that minor errors may have crept into these narratives; we may patiently await the solution of the great question respecting the nature of divine inspiration; and of all the difficulties connected with the Old Testament, if we can retain a firm conviction that the Gospels are historical in all their great features. Then we shall have a Christ whom we shall be able to love, worship, trust, and adore, and who is capable of sympathizing with man.

But if the Christ in whom the Church has believed is no historical reality, if instead of having been a man who walked the earth, invested with a portraiture such as that in which the Evangelists have depicted him, the historical Jesus was a mortal like, but only greater than, ourselves, who has been elevated into the divine by a set of idealizing mythologists; nay, if more than this, he be the mere idealized conception of humanity itself, then the truth must be confessed, that our faith is vain, and that our hopes are vain.

This is the battle-field on which modern theological controversy will be ultimately decided. The theology of the future will centre round the person of Christ, and a more enlarged appreciation of his work.

In the belief of this the following pages have been composed. They are the result of deep meditation on our Lord's person, character, and work. Their object is to prove that the portraiture of the Evangelical Jesus is historical in all its main features, and that those who have endeavoured to resolve the Jesus of the New Testament into an abstract idea or a myth, the foundation of which has been some purely human Jesus, whose real life has been buried under the obscurities of the past, have mistaken the conditions of the problem of which they have boldly announced that they have found the solution. Our object is not to answer the innumerable objections which may be brought to bear, with a greater or less degree of plausibility, against the historical character of the narrative of the Evangelists, but to show that the solution which has been given of the existence of the Jesus of the Evangelists does not rest on the foundation of possibility. If the theory commonly called the mythic theory, or any of its innumerable modifications, be propounded as an account of the

origin of the Gospels, then the successful elaboration of the conception, the dramatised portraiture, and the morality of Jesus is a greater miracle than any of the miraculous stories which have been fabricated by the inventors of the alleged myths.

#### THE NATURE OF THE ARGUMENT AND THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MYTHIC THEORY.

We shall assume only the existence of the Gospels as a fact, and that they contain a dramatised portraiture of one Jesus, whom they call the Christ. Whether the Gospels be esteemed fictitious or historical, this cannot be denied. The Jesus whose work they describe is a great spiritual and moral conception. Quite apart from all questions of their origin, they contain a delineation of a great character, which they have dramatised over an extensive sphere of action. The existence of this requires to be accounted for. The assumption that it is the delineation of an historical reality fulfils all the conditions of the case. Those who assume that it is not, are bound to show that it is possible that it could have originated in fiction.

The second basis of our argument will be the assumption of our opponents, that the Synoptic Gospels were in existence in all their main features prior to the termination of the first century, and the Gospel of St. John prior to the year 150.

From these data we shall prove that the mythic theory is no adequate account of the origin of the Gospels, or of the portraiture of the Christ which they contain, and that the only mode in which its presence can be accounted for, is the assumption that the Jesus depicted in their pages is one who had an historical existence.

It requires no proof that there are only three possible solutions of the problem before us. Either the Jesus of the Gospels is an ideal and mythical creation, or he is partly historical and partly mythical, or if neither of these can be true, he must have been an historical reality.

Modern sceptical criticism has pronounced him to be either wholly or partly mythic. It assumes that miracles are impossible, and infers that as the Gospel narratives are accounts of miraculous events, they must be fictitious. To establish their fabulous origin the opponents of their historical character have exhausted every weapon of historical

criticism. We shall designate by the name of the mythic theory the whole of the literature which is intended to prove that the Gospels are unhistorical.

Those who maintain their mythic origin do not thereby assert that they view them as simple literary forgeries. The period when such an assertion could be made has passed away. Every competent judge knows that this is inconsistent with all the phenomena which they present. Such a charge is still urged against considerable portions or the whole of the fourth Gospel, and occasionally insinuated against detached portions of the Synoptics. But taking the Gospels as a whole, the mythic theory readily admits that their origin must be sought elsewhere than in the regions of conscious fraud.

Those who believe in it are of opinion that the character of the Jesus of the Evangelists is an ideal one, founded it may be on some historical facts, but that these are of so uncertain a character, that for all practical purposes it consists of a body of idealized conceptions which have been created by the enthusiasm of his followers.

It starts with the assumption that the real historical Jesus must have been a man like ourselves. He was probably a very great man after the fashion of his age; but he was no prophet, nor had about him anything of the supernatural. Everything, therefore, which elevates him above the conditions of ordinary humanity must be a fabulous addition.

Our opponents readily concede to him the attribute of greatness, and that he succeeded in inspiring his followers with an immense devotion to himself. Perhaps he ultimately became possessed with the hallucination that he was the Messiah of some old predictions, or allowed his simple-minded followers to invest him with that character. They therefore created a number of idealized conceptions, and in the simplicity of their hearts supposed that their Master had been actually invested with them. They belonged to that class of minds which in philosophic language is unable to distinguish between the objective and the subjective; or, in ordinary phraseology, which cannot discern the difference between the creations of the imagination and the outward world of fact. In their enthusiasm they imagined that Jesus had been everything



which they thought that he ought to have been. He claimed to have been the Messiah. The Messiah ought to have worked miracles. They therefore imagined that they had seen Jesus perform them. It was an historical fact that he had been publicly executed. Although this event disappointed their expectations, it only increased their enthusiasm. They still persisted in their belief that he was the Messiah, and assumed that he must have risen from the dead. Some of them saw him with their mental eye, and mistook what existed only in their imaginations for an external reality, and communicated their enthusiasm to the rest. His removal from them gave full scope to their imagination. One devoted follower added this trait to his character, and another that. At length they imagined that he ought to have been both divine and human. They formed the conception of a divine man and attributed it to the historic Jesus. Step by step they idealized such a character, until the various phantasies of the time assumed a concrete form in the ideal picture of the Jesus of the Gospels. This portraiture, as we now contemplate it in the Evangelists, is the result of a fusion into one mass of all the idealization which arose in the Christian Society during the course of the first century. The forms in which the mythic theory has been presented are very numerous, but such are their general outlines when stript of all their accessories.

It will not be denied that if the Gospels are fictions, they are noble ones; and that the greatest creations of the poetic imagination are as nothing in comparison with them. If the believers in their unhistorical character are asked when or where they originated, the answer must be that in an obscure corner of Judæa, out of the existing elements of thought and feeling, the idea arose of elaborating a Christ. This originated in some deep-seated want of human nature which had been hitherto inarticulate. Its rough idea was based on some ill-understood prophecies, which had deeply penetrated the popular mind. In time it assumed a concrete form, and breathed active principles of life into the old religions and moralities. The movement was the result of the spontaneous action of the human mind. Its cause was some occult power dwelling in human nature, the manifestations of which are rare; only we must

beware that we do not say that it descended from heaven. A body of enthusiastic men reversed the conditions of the moral world. Genius took a prodigious leap. At last the glorious conception of the Evangelical Jesus arose like a Sun in the spiritual world.

After this conception had been formed, it had to be dramatised in an extended course of action. A morality had to be conceived of, in which the divine man should be arrayed, and a religion worthy of him to live in and to teach. A power had to be created which should be capable of breathing into a world of selfishness some of the pure fire of religion and morality exhibited in his life and teaching. The power by which those who maintain that the Gospels are unhistorical assert that all this has been effected, was that of an enthusiastic temperament, which unconsciously embodied conceptions of the imagination in a succession of mythical creations.

The line of argument which we have pointed out, will relieve us of the necessity of answering seriatim the innumerable objections which have been adduced against the credibility of the Gospel history. The great objection to it, the antecedent improbability of miracles, belongs to metaphysical science, and forms no proper subject of historical inquiry. The utmost which history is entitled to do, is to examine the credibility of any particular event, free from all antecedent bias. She may assert that miracles never have occurred within her observation, but to pronounce them impossible, and to assume that every miraculous narrative is unworthy of attention, is beyond her province. To assert that an apparently historical document must be mythical because it clashes with a dogma of this description, prior to all examination of the evidence on which it rests, is to assume the whole subject of debate.

In addition to the argument derived from the alleged impossibility of miracles, the believers in the mythic theory have endeavoured to prove that the Gospels contain numerous contradictions to historic fact. They have also exhausted every effort to show that they have a vast array of incongruities and contradictions in their internal structure; and that the facts as they are exhibited in one Gospel are at issue with those contained in another. The minutest points of variation in the Evangelists have been

adduced for this purpose, with that determination which is not unfrequently displayed in attempts to prove a foregone conclusion.

It is well known that if an acute critic is bent on doing so, there is no historical event on record against the probability of which, in the precise form in which it has been related, plausible objections may not be adduced. To this kind of difficulty, the fragmentary character of the Gospels, and the sources of information out of which they present unquestionable indications of having been composed, render them peculiarly liable. Still mankind have agreed to receive as unquestionable verities, a great number of events which are subject to similar objections.

The utmost which such difficulties can establish is that the authors have committed many mistakes, or were possessed of imperfect information. They do not in the smallest degree affect the fact on which our argument is based, that they contain a dramatised portraiture of the Jesus, whom they have invested with the attributes of the Christ. Of this we are adequate judges. We are placed in the same position as we should be if we had in our possession a great painting. We might be unable to give any account of the mode of its transmission, but we should be fully competent to determine whether it was an ideal one, or the copy of an historical reality.

History will furnish us with the basis of our argument. She testifies that all developments of the human mind have been effected in conformity with a law of progress. Our opponents propound a theory respecting the origin of the Gospels which does not rest on direct historic evidence. It consists of a number of inferences and suppositions; and is largely founded on conjecture. The question therefore arises, Is it possible that the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists could have been evolved as an ideal or mythical conception according to the conditions which history imposes, and subject to the laws of mental development, to the truth of which she testifies?

We shall prove that it is impossible to give any rational account of the origin, growth, and development of the Evangelical conception of the Christ, on the supposition that the Jesus of the Gospels is an unhistorical character.

For this purpose it will be necessary to investigate the

nature of that portraiture; the difficulties which must have encircled those persons who were engaged in its creation; the general character of the morality of the Gospels; the laws of the moral and spiritual development of man; and the state of Jewish thought and feeling in which it originated. We shall then show that the principles laid down by the mythic theory supply us with no adequate account of its existence, but involve us in the last degree of absurdity and contradiction; that the time which it postulates for its creation is utterly inadequate to effect it; that short as is that period, the facts of history require that it should be greatly reduced; that it is inconsistent with the phenomena presented by the Gospels; that the unity of the portraiture of the Evangelical Jesus is only consistent with its historical reality; and that consequently the Gospels must be historical in all their main features. Such is our argument.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE PORTRAITURE OF JESUS AS IT IS EXHIBITED IN THE GOSPELS.

It is essential to our argument that we should have before us a clear view of what the Evangelists have effected, in order that we may be able to form a right estimate of the difficulties which they have surmounted, on the supposition that their Jesus is a mythical creation. For the sake of our argument we must assume this to have been the case.

What then was the starting point, from which the Evangelical conception of the Christ must have originated? The only possible answer to this is the state of Jewish feeling and ideas on religious and moral subjects, prevalent at the commencement of our era. From that it must have originated, and by a succession of growths it must have produced the divine portraiture of the Evangelists.

We shall hereafter discuss this state of feeling with the view of ascertaining its precise nature. For the present we will concede to the supporters of the mythic theory the utmost which they claim, that the Messianic conceptions contained in the book of Enoch were developed prior to our Lord's advent. The evidence that such was the case is of a very doubtful character; but for the purpose of the argument, we will assume that the originators of Christianity based the conception of their Christ on the Messiah of the book of Enoch, instead of on the more imperfect Messianic conceptions of the Old Testament.

In the book of Enoch the Messiah is set forth as one who was to unite the divine and human in his person. He was to be both the Son of God and the Son of Man. The form in which this idea appears is unquestionably an advance beyond any contained in the Old Testament.

If the originators of the conception of the Christ of the Gospels had not found this two-fold aspect of the Messiah ready to their hands, it would have increased the difficulties of the problem which they were required to solve. A number of metaphysical difficulties respecting the possibility of the union of the divine and human must at once have presented themselves to their minds, and must have been settled in some way before they could have proceeded a single step in the direction of developing the Christ of the Gospels. We will suppose however, that they had all the advantages which could be derived from the perusal of the book of Enoch, and that they started with the unconscious purpose of metamorphosing the human Jesus into the Messiah of this book; still they would have had to invent the whole complicated portraiture of the Christ of the Evangelists. Between it and the Messiah of the book of Enoch lies an interval so vast, that it is not easy to estimate its extent.

We concede that the authors of the Gospel myths started with the assumption of the possibility of the union of the divine and human in a single person. The task which lay before them was to dramatise this conception in a succession of mythical creations.

As the very groundwork of their conception of the Christ, it was necessary that they should solve the following problems, all unsolved before, and for the solution of



which the book of Enoch does not afford them the smallest assistance. They had to determine the mode in which the two distinct factors of the divine and the human should be united in a single personality, the degree of prominence which should be assigned to each, and how they should be blended in an harmonious unity. When they had agreed upon this point, it was further necessary that they should dramatise it over an extensive sphere of action.

These problems, which philosophers might have discussed for ever without arriving at an agreement, have been successfully solved according to the mythic theory by the following means. A number of credulous men, without concert, have spontaneously elaborated myths of the same general aspect and character, and have all solved these problems in exactly the same manner, and thereout emerged the conception of the Jesus of the Gospels.

A reference to the Old Testament will show us the difficulty of the problem which the Evangelists have solved. They had no other model wherewith to work than the conceptions which it supplied. The object of all revelation is to find out a point of union between God and man. All other attempts which literature contains are not worth referring to. The minds of the inventors of the Gospel myths must have been deeply imbued with the spirit of the Old Testament writings. But so wide is the interval which separates these from the Gospels, that they must have proved not an aid but a hindrance in the undertaking.

In investing Deity with moral attributes, the prophets have been obliged to employ, not only the changing alterations of human feeling, but, not unfrequently those which belong to human frailty. They have been compelled to clothe the All Holy and All Perfect with some of the fiercer passions of humanity. The result is that they have placed before us the portrait of a being who is awful rather than benevolent. The moral feelings of the times were harsh, and the Deity is depicted in colours corresponding to those feelings.

The Old Testament seeks to bring God and man into direct contact. The closest which its writers could conceive of, was in the state of prophetic inspiration.

But various as are the forms of prophetic illapse, a



deep gulph invariably separates the divine from the human. They always form two separate factors, and refuse to unite in a single consciousness. Throughout the Old Testament they nowhere present the smallest tendency to union, nor in any other aspect in which they are presented to us in either the ancient or the modern world. The persons of the inspired and the inspirer are invariably distinct. The prophet felt no nearer relationship to God than other men. The light of inspiration, whatever it might have been, is never represented as an illumination dwelling within the prophet's bosom as its permanent temple; it invariably comes from without, and by the very terms of its utterance implies the presence of a separate consciousness. That separation shows no tendency to grow less in the later prophets. In the Psalms, where the distinction is less marked, the utterances are those of a personality purely human.

But although these Scriptures were the subject of the constant study and the devout reverence of the authors of the Gospel myths, they have uniformly portrayed our Lord with a consciousness in which the distinction between these two factors does not exist, and they have succeeded in dramatising him over an extensive sphere of action without once portraying them with the slightest tendency to separation, whilst all that they had read and all that they had felt must have enforced on them the conviction that these two factors must ever continue utterly distinct.

Throughout the four Gospels all our Lord's utterances and acts are uniformly represented as springing out of an illumination existing in the depths of his own consciousness. The assertions in St. John's Gospel, that his acts were in accordance with his Father's will, and his utterances in accordance with His mind, and derived from His teaching, are not exceptions to this. Whenever he speaks or acts, the careful reader of the Gospels cannot help perceiving that the Jesus who is there portrayed, is utterly unconscious of any separation between himself and God. His sayings are all uttered as if they were absolutely divine. As the prophetic formula in delivering an oracle was "thus saith the Lord," or "the Lord hath spoken by me;" so that of our Lord is no less invariably, "I say

unto you." The former expression is never once represented as having passed from his lips throughout the whole of the myths which, according to the believers in the mythic theory, constitute our Gospels.

Inspiration, in its ordinary sense, is a term which is not applicable to the Jesus of the Evangelists, though it was the only known medium of communication between the human and the divine spirit with which they were acquainted. The notion of it implies a distinction between the illuminator and the illumined. But in the Gospels God never speaks to Jesus as He did to the prophets. They do not present us with a single trace of the presence of an enlightening Spirit coming from without. His mind itself is light, and the clearest illumination. He is never once represented as conscious of the presence of a doubt, or a sense of the possibility of error.

Our Lord's consciousness of his entire competence to deal with every question which was brought before him is worthy of particular attention. Such a consciousness never existed in any other man, nor has ever been conceived of in the whole course of human thought. Madmen have occasionally imagined themselves to be God; but they have been unable uniformly to support the character of having all knowledge within the region of their own consciousness.

The Evangelists have frequently depicted our Lord as in the act of dealing with the Old Testament Scriptures. According to their views nothing could have been more sacred. But while he recognises their authority, he is represented as explaining, enlarging, and even as annulling the precepts of Moses. His hearers viewed them as oracles from heaven, and he himself declares that sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than that one tittle of the law shall fail. But while he is thus brought into direct contact with the divine, without the smallest hesitation, he explains or annuls them with no other words than "I say unto you." He does not, like Mahomet, profess to have received a revelation from God, authorising the repeal of a former law by a subsequent divine communication. On the contrary he is depicted as fully able to deal with the divine law which was promulgated at Sinai, and without hesitation he seats himself on the throne of the kingdom of heaven; nor does the thought ever occur

to him that there is any legislative authority in the kingdom of God higher than his own.

Nor do these features of the portraiture of our Lord contrast only with those of Jewish prophets, but also with the conduct of all holy men who ever existed. On such occasions they have pronounced with unanimous voice, that there existed a light and an authority higher than their own. And yet such is the perfection of the character of the Jesus of the Evangelists, that there is not a holy man who ever existed, who has not felt himself in comparison with him unworthy even to carry his shoes.

—Again, the Evangelists have depicted their Jesus as uniformly dwelling in the regions of serene repose in his contact with Deity. In the contemplation of truth the aspect of his mind is one of uniform calmness. Prophets and apostles struggle in giving utterance to the truths which filled their minds. But our Lord never. He is always at the requisite height. Frequently the mind of even a Paul seems, as it were, almost to burst in giving utterance to his thoughts. The wisest of men have felt that there is a height above them which they vainly strive to attain. But the Jesus of the Evangelists is always calm. To mental efforts he is a stranger.

To many of the Jewish prophets the feeling of the immediate presence of the Deity produced a sense of the profound depth of the gulph which separates it from the human. It awakened a feeling of the intensest awe violently affecting their bodily frame. Even a writer of the New Testament describes himself as falling as it were dead when he imagined he witnessed a glorious apparition of the risen Jesus. But no such feeling is ever once attributed to the Jesus of the Evangelists. He is never depicted with any other consciousness of God than that of Father.

But while the mythic Jesus is thus uniformly depicted with a divine consciousness unbroken by a single human frailty, the authors of the myths have succeeded in arraying him in the attributes of a teacher which are intensely human. Our Lord's teaching touches the chord of universal human nature and raises sympathies in the humblest heart. In it the very heart of man speaks to man; it issues from and addresses the tenderest feelings of the human soul. It would have been natural to have depicted the divine as employing images the most remote

from human life. But in the teaching of Jesus the things of God are represented by the most common things of nature, and by the ordinary occurrences of life. The lily and the rose, the seed and the tree, the wheat and the darnel, the labourer in the field and the servant in attendance on his master, the nobleman at his feast, the rich man in his abundance, the miser in his penuriousness and the beggar at the gate, the vine and the fig-tree, the vintage and the dance, universal nature and universal man are the vehicles of his teaching. The divine light has been enshrined by the mythologists in a purely human temple.

This divine consciousness is portrayed with an absolute uniformity of aspect throughout the whole extent of the Gospels. Those who composed the myths could never have been troubled with a single distracting thought as to the mode in which it ought to have been conceived or dramatised. The miraculous stories of the Gospels are very numerous, and according to the views of the supporters of the mythic theory every one of them beyond all question is without the smallest support in historical fact. They were the spontaneous growth of the imaginations of the early credulous followers of our Lord. One elaborated one mythic miracle and one another, and attributed it to Jesus: these inventors therefore must have been numerous. Yet the portraiture of Jesus as a worker of miracles presents a perfect uniformity of type and conception, notwithstanding the multiform aspects in which it might have been dramatised.

Here again we meet with the same aspect of a perfect divine consciousness surrounded by an environment completely human. He is uniformly depicted as performing them at his own pleasure. He refers their performance to himself, and never once describes himself as the mere agent. His exertion of miraculous power is uniformly described as depending on the simple exercise of his own will, and when others ascribe to him the performance of miracles, he has never once said, God performed the miracle, not I.

In thus portraying their Jesus, the numerous authors of these myths must have contradicted every precedent with which they were acquainted, and which they deeply revered. They well knew that their histories repre-

sented that for this very reason their great legislator had been excluded from entering into the land of Canaan. What is remarkable, the apostles never made this portion of their Master's conduct the subject of imitation, but when they had the opportunity ascribed these miracles not to themselves, but to him.

There is not a single miraculous story in the Gospels in the performance of which our Lord is not uniformly portrayed in the aspect of calm dignity. This dignity he always maintains, even when his opponents assert that his conduct or words are blasphemous. It only leads him to encircle himself with brighter rays of the divine character, and by his acts to prove that he possessed all the dignity which he claimed.

Still, here also the divine is nicely fitted into an element which is intensely human: Our Lord is uniformly depicted as moved by the intensest feelings of compassion for human misery. Throughout the whole portraiture he is presented to us as the absolute abnegation of self-seeking. He is always described as carefully retiring to avoid the applause of the multitude. He never appears in any other dress than a vesture of humility.

When then the creators of these myths set themselves to metamorphose either a human Jesus, or the Messianic conceptions of the book of Enoch, into the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists, a number of the most difficult problems must have presented themselves to their minds as to the manner in which this was to be effected. But the whole of the myths which they have created have portrayed him under a common type.

These myths are true to this type in the minutest points of detail. Of this we must adduce one remarkable example.

Our Lord is frequently depicted in the Gospels as speaking of his Father in relation both to himself and to other men. But in the whole series of the discourses which have been attributed to him, he is never once described as confusing the peculiar relationship in which he stood to God, with that in which men stand to Him. The authors of the Gospels have put into his mouth the expression, "my Father and your Father," but never "our Father," as describing a relationship to God common to himself and



others. The fourth Gospel sums up this peculiarity in one pregnant sentence, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." The only instance in which the words "Our Father" have been attributed to him is in the prayer, not composed for himself, but for the use of his disciples.

Renan tells us that the historic Jesus considered God as standing in the same relation to himself and to every member of the human family; the only difference between Jesus and other men being that he was the first who clearly perceived the reality and nearness of this relationship. In one word, that he always viewed God not as "My Father," but as "Our Father."

Nothing can give a clearer view of the difficulties which the authors of the Gospels have surmounted, than the remark of this acute objector. He considers that the mythic element in them is large, and that the historic Jesus was a purely human character. But he believes that a great number of the utterances which they have preserved, especially those of the Synoptics, are genuine. Now, if our Lord in these utterances always maintained the distinction between his Sonship and that of other men, this hypothesis falls to the ground. But if this distinction is due to the writers of the myths, we are met by the remarkable fact, that they have successfully dramatised the divine and human in our Lord even to the minutest details, so as never to have put into his mouth an expression inconsistent with that idea. From this inference there is no escape, unless we suppose the myths to have undergone a revision by some writer of the Johannean type.

The evangelical portraiture of Jesus exhibits a wonderful combination of dignity and humility in his person. The humble carpenter is made to sustain with perfect grace the part of King of men in his every act and word. For a being purely human his pretensions are certainly extravagant. The peasant at once seats himself down in Moses' chair, but his mode of filling it is faultless. He is uniformly depicted with an ever-abiding consciousness of the supreme dignity of his person; but in the midst of this dignity, he never once forgets his state of humiliation. When the laws of nature yield at his bidding, he is still



meek and lowly in heart. It is impossible to discover, throughout the numerous myths which must compose our Gospels, one single act which does not unite the sublimest dignity with the purest humility.

Such are the varied aspects of this portion of our Lord's character as it has been dramatised by the Evangelists. It presents a divine unity of conception and a faultlessness of execution. Yet, according to the mythic theory, it must have been the work, not of one person, but of many; and has been created by credulous men embodying their imaginations in the form of myths intended to give a divine aspect to a human Jesus. It is compelled to assume that, by spontaneous impulse alone, they have solved in precisely the same manner a number of the most complicated and doubtful problems without the aid of any model to direct their course.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE PORTRAITURE OF THE SUFFERING JESUS OF THE EVANGELISTS.

WHATEVER aid the inventors of these myths might have derived from the book of Enoch, it would have completely failed them in depicting a suffering Messiah. To this conception that book is a stranger. The Messiah was to be the Son of Man and the Son of Woman; but the aspect which he presents is glorious. The author of this book knew nothing of a Messiah in a state of abject humiliation.

The Apocalypse of Esdras tells us that the Messiah was to die, but its pre-Christian date is more than questionable. This book could have afforded them no other aid in their creation of the great conception of the Evangelists, the dying Christ. It is difficult to imagine how men who expected a Messiah, such as that of the book of Enoch, could easily bring themselves to believe in a suffering and dying One.

But the historic Jesus died, and the enthusiasm of his

followers led them still to believe in his Messiahship. His death must be cured by his resurrection. It was therefore necessary to invest the human Jesus with that superhuman aspect in which he is exhibited in the pages of the Evangelists. The human Jesus was therefore conceived of as having suffered in a manner becoming a divine man; and after a while his followers believed that it was the true historical account. The problem must therefore have presented itself to the mythologists, if the divine is assumed as capable of being united to the human, and if it is necessary that the human should suffer and die, what is the correct form of dramatising the idea?

It was fortunate that such a question had to be determined by a body of mythologists, and not of philosophers. Had it been proposed to the latter for solution, the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists must have remained undeveloped till this hour. The discussion would not yet have terminated.

But the mythologists boldly set themselves to the task, and have produced the portraiture of a sufferer such as never before nor since has been conceived by man. The myths which they created without the smallest concert were all stamped with the same features.

It is evident that the following difficulties must have beset their path. If the human was to be represented as dying through suffering, the danger at once arose that the artist would represent the divine as swallowed up in the sufferings of the human. But if the divine maintained its character, then it required the nicest management to portray it as not lending an undue support to a human sufferer. Three other agencies also had to be taken into the account as part of the conception; the life was to be dramatised as surrendered in the great act of self-sacrificing love; the death was predetermined in the counsels of God; it had to be accomplished through the free agency of man.

The attempt to solve a portion of this problem had been previously made by a poet of the highest genius. The portraiture in which he has dramatised his conceptions has been fortunately preserved in the Prometheus of Æschylus. This may be called the drama of a suffering God, or rather of a being half divine and half human. It is doubtless a wonderful and terrific creation. But no person will ven-

ture to doubt, that if the suffering Jesus be a mythic creation, the great poet has been utterly distanced by the credulous mythologists of Galilee. They have all been unanimous in the solution of the problem; they have solved it differently from the poet; and they have solved it rightly. The Prometheus is utterly unlike in conception to the suffering and dying Jesus.

It must also be observed that in framing their conception, the authors of the myths could have had before them no model; and that their Jewish line of thought was a most unfit state of feeling for the production of the evangelical portraiture. The ideal of the Jewish saint, as it is depicted in the Old Testament, is certainly not that of a meek or patient sufferer. His motto when he suffered unjustly was, "The Lord look on it and requite it." The Jew was seldom in a soft or hesitating mood. If he had been armed with superhuman power, it would have gone hard with his enemies. He longed for the day when the Lord should root the ungodly out of the land. These feelings had not softened, but rather hardened with the advance of ages. Nothing could have been more difficult of conception to him than a Messiah who would not trample his enemies under his feet. Such an atmosphere of moral feeling must have been a great difficulty in the way of those, who, when they had realized the fact that the Messiah ought to have suffered and died, had to set themselves to portray a suffering Christ.

But notwithstanding the difficulties which surrounded them, the mythologists have given us a portraiture of the sufferings of the divine man so perfect that it seems scarcely possible to improve it by the addition of another touch.

They have represented that every circumstance of his impending sufferings was known by him beforehand. Through every previous scene, except the agony in the garden, he is depicted as maintaining an unalterable calmness. This calmness is indissolubly united with the most active play of human affection. It is preserved under every possible circumstance of trial.

The nearer and nearer approach of his hour is wholly powerless to divert his attention from the fulfilment of his Father's work. The Evangelists have depicted him without one thought about self arising in his bosom. The

only thing which perturbs him is the presence of the traitor. But the divine shines out in its human environment. The calmness and mildness of his expostulation are unequalled.

But had the Saviour been depicted as exhibiting no perturbation, the divine might have appeared to have swallowed up the human. The creators of the mythic Jesus therefore determined that it was necessary to depict him in a form of depression, which would almost crush his human soul. They felt truly that while man is man, death by extremity of suffering, mental and bodily, must agitate the frame even in its anticipation. But it was necessary that the divine should be preserved intact. This was the problem which they were required to solve. Their answer was the scene at Gethsemane. Who shall describe it after them?

This has been a favourite subject for the use of the theological dissecting knife. They have been eager to lay bare the whole scene so as to present its minutest details and causes to the human understanding. They have striven to define the limits of the Godhead and the Manhood with metaphysical precision. But while the Evangelists have left this wholly unattempted, they have succeeded in dramatising the conception of the divine man in the agony of mental perturbation, without absorbing the divine in the human or the human in the divine. The divine consciousness throughout the scene is preserved unquenched.

Throughout the whole scene of his sufferings they have depicted an imperturbable divine will in conjunction with a mutable human one. His higher will absolutely coincides with the divine. His lower human will shrinks from suffering, but is uniformly brought into conformity with the higher divine will which knew no mutability nor change. They have succeeded in enshrining the one in the temple of the other, and we discover the same aspect of it running through every portion of the Evangelists. This portion of their work forms one of the grandest conceptions which was ever conceived by man. The meeting with his foes is the most perfect portraiture of self-surrendering power.

Up to this point the delineation of the passion has, by

the silence of objectors, been admitted to be faultless. The next scene, which depicts our Lord before the Sanhedrim and Pilate, has been impugned. It has been alleged that by offering no defence he became an accessory to his own murder.

Considering the ability of those by whom this objection has been urged, it is a striking illustration of the difficulties by which the creators of these myths must have been beset in their efforts to dramatise correctly the conception of a suffering Christ, and the temptations which they were under to present us with a different aspect of the passion. We are not ignorant that many of the supporters of the mythic theory are ready to admit that many parts of the history of the passion are real facts in the life of the historical, but purely human Jesus. This we are unable to concede. On the supposition that the historical Jesus was a mere man like ourselves, we maintain that, although some historical facts may perhaps underlie the history of the passion, yet the form in which it appears in the Evangelists must be essentially mythical and ideal. It bears the closest possible relation to the entire portraiture of the Evangelical Jesus, and is founded on the supposition of its truth. It is inconceivable that any historical Jew of that age, or in fact any mere man of any age, could have died as the Evangelists have depicted their Jesus. The purely human Jesus may have been crucified, and have exhibited the resignation of a very holy Jew; but that he could have died as the Evangelists have dramatised him, if he were a mere man, is to us utterly incredible. On the supposition of his having been a mere man, we maintain that the chief portions of the portraiture must be as mythical as the miracles. They equally contradict experience.

But the Evangelists, by representing our Lord as preserving a nearly unbroken silence before the Sanhedrim and Pilate, have not made him an accessory to his own murder. The Jewish rulers were already in possession of all needful information. Our Lord had placed his claims before them. They knew the case thoroughly, and had made up their minds. He had no other defence to offer than what had been repeatedly set before them. They felt their power to be at stake, and were determined to main-



tain it. The formalities of their judicial proceedings were the actings of sanctimonious hypocrites.

The Synoptic Gospels depict our Lord before Pilate as replying to his interrogatory, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" by a simple confession that he was so, without giving the heathen judge any explanation of the sense in which he claimed that title. According to their account Pilate thereupon pronounced him not guilty. This conduct of Pilate is certainly inexplicable, unless we presuppose the truth of what is expressly stated in the fourth Gospel, that our Lord accompanied the admission by explaining the sense in which he claimed to be a king. Such an explanation, united with Pilate's previous knowledge of facts, the party spirit in which the charge originated, and the absence of all reliable testimony, at once caused the accusation to break down. At any rate, Pilate considered that he had a sufficiently strong case before him to induce him again and again to make the assertion that the prisoner was innocent.

It follows, therefore, that the Evangelical description of the scene, both before the Sanhedrim and Pilate, does not represent our Lord as an accessory to his own death.

But it is in the highest degree improbable that any being who was simply a man would have acted in the same manner in which the Evangelists have portrayed their Jesus. The error consists in considering that they meant it to be the delineation of the conduct of an ordinary man, however great. The objection is founded on this incorrect assumption.

The portraiture is that of one who is conceived of as a divine man freely offering his life in an act of self-sacrifice. The whole scene is supposed to originate in the determinate counsels of God, and to have been effected through the free agency of man. This is directly asserted in the Synoptic Gospels, and underlies their whole drama.

If the Christ was to be portrayed as freely offering his life in an act of self-sacrifice to God, it was necessary that his spotlessness should form an essential portion of the picture. The Evangelists, therefore, have represented the Judge who condemns him as pronouncing him to be guiltless.



But there was another condition essential for the correct delineation of this portion of the portrait. It was necessary that the sufferer should be depicted as making a voluntary surrender of his life.

If the Evangelists had described our Lord as offering a defence, or attempting to work on the consciences of the agents in the scene, this portion of the picture would have been entirely marred. They have therefore rightly conceived the situation in depicting their suffering Christ in the act of silent submission, the agents acting of their own free will, and our Lord leaving the means of the accomplishment of his self-sacrifice to be evolved by the course of his Father's providence.

The character, however, which has been conceived is not that of a simple human being. The problem was a hard one, but the mythologists have rightly solved it. Had they attended to the advice of the objector they would have depicted not a divine Christ, but a human Jesus. Contemplated from this point of view, the whole scene before the Governor is perfect.

But it was a necessary part of the conception that the death of the human Jesus should be dramatised so as to invest him with the attributes of one who was divine, and at the same time retained all the affections and feelings of a man.

If the Gospels are myths, the inventive powers of their authors are now going to be tried to the uttermost, or their great portraiture will be marred. A flaw here will be fatal to its completeness.

The number of difficulties which must have presented themselves to the minds of the inventors, must have been immensely great, and various are the conceivable modes of solving the problem. We have already noticed some of them. The temptation to substitute a phantom which should seem to expire on the cross in the place of the actual Jesus was great. We know that fictitious accounts of the passion were in circulation, in which this substitution was actually made. We ask, Does it improve the picture?

The extremity of suffering concentrates the mind on itself. It is hardly possible to imagine a feeling of philanthropy in the most lively exercise in the midst of

torture sufficient to extinguish the life of a man in the fulness of his strength. Yet such is the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists, dramatised without a flaw.

But it will be said, three of those anecdotes which give the chief pathos to the Evangelical narrative are found only in a single Gospel, that of St. Luke. We allude to the matchless address to the daughters of Jerusalem, uttered on the road to the place of crucifixion, when sinking under the burden of the cross; the prayer for his murderers, offered during the act of execution; and the scene of the penitent thief, which took place after the actual suspension on the cross. It may be objected that these are subsequent additions.

We do not deny that these three anecdotes form the most sublime incidents of the passion. It is hardly possible to raise ourselves to the full elevation of their moral conception. We admit that there is something in them more than human. But we reply that although they are more sublime portraitures of the divine in suffering than any which are contained in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, those of the latter belong essentially to the same type.

But if we admit that these are later additions, it by no means affects our argument. The question is not when the several parts of the narrative were elaborated, but whether the combined effect of the whole Evangelical portrait is that of a mere man, or of a divine man; and if the latter, whether it is elaborated with faultless perfection. We must then consider whether it could have been evolved by any process suggested by the mythic theory, or whether its moral elevation is not such as to prove that it is the true copy of a divine original.

— We observe, therefore, that the incident of the address to the women on the road to crucifixion is an instance of the most sublime unselfishness, of a calmness and self-possession inconceivable in a man under similar circumstances.

The conception of the prayer for his murderers is so intensely sublime, that the thought of such a spirit of forgiveness had never before occurred to a human mind.

The scene of the penitent thief is the most perfect

exhibition which we can conceive of the presence of Divinity personally abiding in dying humanity.

The portraits of the other Evangelists are of essentially the same type. They depict the profoundest depth of suffering, assailed by the deepest scorn, borne in silent submission. Peter has described the scene in his well-known words: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously." These may be separate scenes, but they are separate scenes of the same drama. Where shall we find a character like the suffering Jesus in all previous history?

But in the midst of the intense self-possession, the calmness, and the submission exhibited in this delineation, we are in danger of losing the conception of perfect humanity. We see the triumph of a divine being, but hardly that of one possessing our very nature.

If we were to debate the question on philosophical principles, we should with difficulty arrive at a conclusion how such a conception was to be delineated in action. But the fabricators of the myths went to work spontaneously, and presented as their solution of it, the exclamation on the cross, and the scene of the darkness. They have depicted a sense of desertion, united with unshaken confidence in God. St. John asserts that the divine consciousness was so entire, even while human strength was expiring in death, that the divine sufferer was, almost in the act of dying, able to survey the Scriptures, and observe that in one minute point they were still unaccomplished, which at the last hour he determined to fulfil; and St. Luke describes him as actually expiring with the brightest rays of divine acceptance illumining the previous darkness of his human spirit.

It has been observed that the fourth Gospel omits the mention of some of the darker aspects of our Lord's sufferings, so prominently set forth in the Synoptics. This has been asserted to have been occasioned by its author having felt them to be inconsistent with the divine aspect of the Christ of his imagination, and that he therefore passed them over in silence.

But this wholly fails as an explanation of the phenomena. If such was the conscious purpose of the writer he has not gone far enough to accomplish it, and in his imperfect

attempt, he has spoilt the whole scene. If it was inconsistent with his conception of the Christ to attribute to him the sufferings recorded by the Synoptics, he has not much mended the matter by his expurgated version of them. The difficulty was not in the degree of the sufferings to be attributed to him, but in allowing him to be moved by suffering at all. It was but an indifferent way of meeting this difficulty, to suppress what we must call the more God-like scene of the Synoptics, and portray the superhuman sufferer as exclaiming, "I thirst;" and attribute to him two days earlier the perturbation recorded in the interview with the Hellenists. If suffering was to be attributed to the divine Logos, we certainly consider the Synoptic picture as more grand than that of the fourth Gospel.

But if the latter account be historical, and its author the apostle, the omission is entirely consistent with a purpose to describe only that portion of the sufferings which he actually witnessed, and, as we shall see hereafter, with the historical conditions of the case.

The Evangelists, therefore, have solved the problem of dramatising in a single person, a divine consciousness in union with a dying humanity. This wonderful creation, as we are told, was effected by the spontaneous elaboration of mythic stories in the original Christian Society, for the purpose of investing a human Jesus with the attributes of a divine Christ. According to the mythic theory, these various stories, created without concert, ultimately blended themselves into the unity of the conception and portraiture of the Messianic Jesus.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE UNION OF HOLINESS AND BENEVOLENCE IN THE PERSON OF THE JESUS OF THE GOSPELS.

WE must again assume, for the purposes of our argument, that the great Truth contained in our Gospels is an ideal creation invented by a number of mythologists. We are ready to admit that the historical Jesus was a very good and holy man after the ideal of his age, probably at an

elevation above it. But this is not the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists. He stands above the level of all men in all ages. Among real men no such character has ever trod this earth; nor has an ideal man of equal perfection ever been conceived before or since. Unless the historical Jesus was a divine man, it is evident that he who is portrayed in the Gospels must be an ideal creation. The character of the historical Jesus must therefore have passed through a succession of mythical developments, by means of which a good and holy man of the Jewish type was metamorphosed into the divine Christ.

In effecting such a work a multitude of problems must have presented themselves to the minds of the mythologists. These problems admitted an indefinite number of solutions. But although they had no model to direct them, nor the means of deliberating in common, they have all solved them harmoniously.

The first difficulty which must have presented itself, as soon as they attempted to invest the human Jesus with the attributes of perfect goodness and holiness, was the mode in which they ought to be dramatised in action, not in a perfect, but in an imperfect world.

In a perfect world there would be little difficulty; but in an imperfect one the modes of conceiving it would be as various as the minds engaged in the attempt. These attributes, when they encounter moral evil, mutually interfere with each other's action. Perfect holiness assumes the aspect of sternness towards it. Perfect benevolence involves compassion towards evil in every form, and excites the desire not to punish it, but to alleviate the consequences with which it is attended. We can easily conceive either of these attributes as acting separately, but how are they to be united in the same person?

After a lapse of nearly two thousand years this question is as much open to debate as ever. It cannot be solved on abstract principles. The form which it will assume will depend on individual temperament and the current notions of morality. If it were proposed to dramatise such a character, no two persons would blend these attributes in the same proportions. According to the taste of the present day the majority of such repre-



sentations would make benevolence its predominant feature, and leave holiness in the background, or entirely omit it from the picture.

But the mythologists had not only to dramatise the character of a perfectly benevolent and holy man in action in an imperfect world. It was necessary for them to unite the divine and human aspects of these attributes in the same person, and to portray their possessor as armed with superhuman power. The introduction of this divine element into the problem indefinitely complicates the question.

It is impossible to separate the idea of superhuman power from the conception of the Jesus of the Gospels. It stands out on their every page. If we remove it, we do not thereby make the portraiture an historical one, but we destroy its cohesion.

In a perfect world benevolence united with divine power must produce all possible good, and the most perfect holiness would not interfere with its action.

But the difficulty could not help striking the dullest minds, how perfect benevolence was to be dramatised as armed with divine power in a world in which moral evil prevailed, and yet as not uprooting all the sin and misery by which it was surrounded? How again was such a conception to be united with the perfection of holiness?

An ordinary man may be perfectly benevolent, who effects all the good which his limited power enables him to accomplish. But a being possessed of superhuman power cannot be conceived of as perfectly benevolent, while leaving unaccomplished what his power would have enabled him to effect.

Such a being must assume a different bearing towards moral evil from that of a perfectly holy man, who possesses only the ordinary powers of human nature. The conception of holiness implies not only the positive idea of purity, but of abhorrence of moral evil; and when united with the attribute of justice, a desire that it should be rendered to the sinner according to his deeds. A being possessed of superhuman power is placed in an entirely different position with respect to sin, from that of an ordinary man.

Nothing will more strongly illustrate the difficulties



which the mythologists had to overcome in dramatising their conception of a superhuman Christ, than our inability to form a distinct conception of the mode in which these attributes co-exist in the Divine Being. According to our limited conceptions, these attributes must necessarily clash in their action in a world where moral evil is predominant. We assume that in some manner beyond our apprehension they do not clash, but it is impossible to form any conception of the mode of their harmonious acting.

These questions have proved the stumbling-block of theologians in every age, and will to the end of time. If we take it for granted that the Deity is perfectly benevolent, we are compelled to assume that He must have accomplished all the good which the possession of infinite power and wisdom could have enabled Him to effect. But this world is His work, and yet it is full of moral and physical evil.

A similar difficulty arises from the consideration of His perfect holiness. If God be perfectly holy, and at the same time all powerful, and all wise, how comes it to pass that evil exists in the world of which He is the author? Such questions have presented themselves to the mind of every thoughtful man in every age.

These difficulties required to be solved in some way by the mythologists who undertook to invest the human Jesus with the attributes of the divine Christ. They stood at the very threshold of their undertaking. They could have had no model to guide them. The study of creation could not have aided them. They were thrown on the powers of their own minds alone. Unless some unknown cause was in operation, their ideal creations must have embodied conceptions of the utmost variety of type.

It will not be necessary for our argument to prove that the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists presents us with an actual solution of these difficulties. It will be sufficient for us to show that all the numerous myths out of which it has been composed have been framed on a substantial unity of conception, and involve a more elevated idea of the union of perfect holiness and benevolence in a Divine person than any which has ever been conceived.

The argument will present itself under the following aspect. Whenever the human intellect has attempted to solve these questions, it has presented solutions of as varied a character as are the diversities of the minds who have engaged in the attempt. But when mythologists undertook a similar work, the myths which they created without any previous concert were all elaborated on precisely the same principles; and taken together, they make up the most beautiful character which has ever existed as a fact, or been portrayed in fiction.

It is also worthy of observation that such models as they were in possession of must have proved hindrances rather than helps. If they had the book of Enoch in their hands, its aid would have been purely negative. The Old Testament they possessed and profoundly revered, but if they had taken its conceptions for their model, they would have carried them in a direction utterly remote from that of the Christ of the Gospels.

If, again, they had attempted to portray their Jesus on such a model as the natural Universe supplies, they were quite as likely to have copied the sterner aspects of nature as the milder. This was uniformly done by all their predecessors in the same field.

If the mythic theory be a true account of the origin of the Gospels, they are made up of a multitude of fictitious stories, which have been mistaken for history. Now we observe that every one of these myths depicts the character of Jesus as one of absolute purity. The Gospels present this character under various aspects. They exhibit him as a worker of miracles, as a teacher, in the common relations of life, as answering opponents, as a sufferer. Still the character is dramatised in the same typical form of absolute purity. He is always depicted as animated by the same zeal for God, the same abnegation of self, the same aspect of holiness, the same separation from sin, the same benevolent compassion for the sinner, the same sympathy for suffering, the same self-command, the same unconquerable patience, and the same tenderness of friendship. Numerous as must be the fictions which compose the Gospels, not one of them has depicted these aspects of his character under a different typical form.

The mythologists have been no less unanimous that such a character ought to be dramatised as one which is absolutely unselfish, and have been entirely successful in the execution of what they have undertaken. This is one of the most remarkable features in the Gospels. We may read them again and again, and we shall fail to detect one single instance of self-seeking exhibited either in our Lord's actions or his teaching. We cannot even find in them a trace that a conscious reference to self ever once arose in his bosom, except when it was called forth by the exigencies of his Father's work. Every myth out of which the Gospels were composed, must have borne precisely the same impress.

Now it is evident that such an elevation of tone is no conceivable morality for man. It is conceivable only as that of a divine or idealized man. The most holy of actual men are unable in their actions to avoid some reference to self. A man absolutely unselfish must be as mythic as our opponents believe a miracle to be. He is a miracle. Yet this is the portraiture which every one of the mythologists has assigned to our Lord.

But the fact cannot be too carefully observed that while these enthusiastic mythologists have unanimously portrayed their Jesus as acting on a morality absolutely unselfish, in their numerous representations of him as a moral teacher, they have not exhibited him as teaching this as a morality possible for man. He is again and again represented as appealing to an enlightened self-love as a motive for human action. His own perfect character is to be the ideal towards which men are indefinitely to progress; but the mythologists have preserved the clearest distinction between the morality of the Master and that which is possible for the disciple.

Self is so essential a factor in human consciousness that it is impossible for us to disentangle ourselves from its influences. A morality not founded on the recognition of it is an impossible one for mankind. Yet, while the mythologists have fully recognised this truth, thereby showing that they were no deluded fanatics, there is not the smallest trace that one of them ever thought of ascribing it to Christ. Ordinary men cannot help, consciously or unconsciously, pursuing their own happiness as an end.

Our Lord has never been thus depicted by them in a single instance.

The Evangelists therefore have succeeded in accomplishing what no one besides has ever effected. They have both conceived and dramatised the pure idea of unselfishness, in a complicated sphere of action, and they have done it without a flaw. This has been effected, if we are to believe the mythic theory, by a body of credulous men spontaneously elaborating myths, who were yet well aware that such was not the aspect of the highest form of existing holiness.

We have pointed out the difficulty of blending together perfect holiness and benevolence. Nothing can be more divine than the manner in which the mythologists have united in the same character the greatest long-suffering, with the sterner aspects of holiness. There is a point where evil and wilfulness become positively sinful, but to define it is impossible. Towards this aspect of human nature our Lord is uniformly portrayed as arising in all the sternness of holiness. But until evil has reached this, however provoking a character it may assume, they have always depicted him as mild, patient, and loving. Nothing can be finer than the contrast between our Lord as he is dramatised in the act of denouncing the sanctimonious hypocrite, and the mildness with which he is made to bear with the stupidity of his disciples, even when it approaches the confines of wilfulness.

There was no little danger when the mythologists depicted our Lord's separation from evil in so absolute a form, that they would have invested him with the aspect of harshness. To avoid this would be one of the most difficult labours of the poet or the novelist. Holy men, when they approximate to it, are usually little capable of sympathising with the imperfections of others.

But while the Evangelists have depicted the divine man as untouched with evil, they have portrayed him as habitually exhibiting the deepest compassion for those in a state of ignorance and sin. Instead of avoiding the society of sinners, he is ever seeking it, and exhausting himself in efforts to do them good. From that tenderness none are excluded but the hypocrite.

This feature in the Evangelical portraiture of Christ is

worthy of the deepest attention. We believe that prior to the conception of the idea by the mythologists, it never entered the head of Jew or Gentile that it was a work peculiarly divine for a great man to expend himself in labours to rescue from ruin the ignorant and the degraded. Least of all can we conceive of a man pre-eminently holy after the ancient model, voluntarily seeking the society of publicans and harlots for the purpose of improving them. But the Evangelists have so depicted their Jesus, and all the world have since unanimously agreed, that for the holy to exhaust themselves in efforts to rescue the degraded is a divine work.

The peculiar saying, that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost," is found in connection with a single parable, but every mythic story which has been interwoven into the structure of the Gospels has been composed on the supposition of its truth. On this point all the mythologists attained to a glorious unanimity; and whether the Jesus of the Evangelists be historical or mythical, the whole reformatory spirit of the modern world has issued from this feature in his character.

But in this portion of their work the Evangelists encountered a serious difficulty. Their whole conception of Jesus was that of one armed with superhuman power. That power could be called into action by an act of his will. It may seem to be an objection against the perfection of his moral character, that the divine man is so sparing in calling his supernatural power into exercise for the promotion of good. If he could cure diseases, why did he cure so few of them? Why did he not cure those of a whole province, or even of the world? This is so obvious that those who created the myths must have been sorely tempted to depict their hero as at least putting an end to all the woe by which he was surrounded. Such miraculous power as is depicted in the Evangelists might certainly have enabled its possessor to create a Millennium.

We reply, the almighty and merciful God has this power, and He does not call it into operation. Great was the temptation for a body of credulous elaborators of myths to dramatise Divine power united with perfect goodness as putting an end to all the suffering by which it was surrounded. But they unanimously determined not so to



depict their Christ. Nature has not so represented God.

But instead of thus representing him, they all agreed that he ought to be portrayed as incessantly labouring at the work of doing good, as teaching that it was divine to do so, and as declaring that the obligation to conform to institutions most sacred in the eyes of his countrymen was suspended, whenever it interfered with the discharge of so glorious a work. Notwithstanding the strictness of the Jewish notions on the duty of the Sabbatical rest, some peculiar impulse seized the mythologists, and induced them to portray their Jesus as working no inconsiderable number of their fictitious miracles on the Sabbath day.

There is another aspect of the character of the divine man worthy of our attention. The merciful friend of publicans and sinners is dramatised throughout the whole of the Evangelical narrative as denouncing sanctimonious hypocrites with an energy self-possessed but vehement.

This is the uniform aspect of the whole Evangelical portrait. It culminates into its most awful dimensions in his final denunciation of Pharisaic hypocrisy.

It has been objected that when our Lord uttered this terrific denunciation his character had undergone a deterioration. Its original loveliness had been soured by opposition. But this objection, while it professes to be founded on the Evangelical narrative itself, overlooks its statements. The character there dramatised is not that of a man lovely at the commencement, but who had become soured at the conclusion of his course. At no portion of our Lord's life does its absolute unselfishness shine more brightly than at its close. Its last fortnight, the very period when its most awful denunciations against Phariseeism were uttered, is filled with the most touching displays of tenderness, far more so than during the earlier periods of the Evangelical history. The great denunciation recorded by Matthew concludes with a burst of tenderness, which most judges have pronounced to be exquisite. Human deterioration follows a well known law. A man never deteriorates in the manner in which the Evangelists have depicted their Jesus. That portraiture combines at the same moment in his character the depths of the tenderest compassion united with a feeling which can only be described as that of offended holiness aroused to action.



It is, therefore, so far from being true that this peculiar aspect of his character belongs to the latter portion of the life of Jesus, that it is a feature inherent in the whole conception of it. Even John the Baptist is described as denouncing this form of sanctimonious hypocrisy with no less energy.

In thus dramatising the person of the Holy One of God with the opposite aspects of the softest benevolence and of holiness like a consuming fire, the Evangelists have effected a creation which has defied the powers both of the ancient and modern worlds. The ancient world was, when holy, uniformly stern. It is the tendency of the modern world to conceive of benevolence as the only worthy attribute of Deity. Before benevolence the attributes of holiness and of justice grow dim.

The mythologists have dissented from the opinions of both the ancient and modern world, although in doing so they have acted contrary to what would have been done by many leaders of modern enlightenment, if they had occupied their position. Their divine man is portrayed as uniting in his person the severe aspects of holiness with the mildest forms of benevolence. It may be asked, Were they right in thus dramatising the ideal of perfection?

The only mode in which such a problem can be determined is by inquiring, Does the portraiture of the divine man correspond with the intimations which nature and providence give us of the character of God? Does it also image to us in clearer outline those portions of it which natural revelation has left obscure?

The providential government of God unites together the awful and the lovely. Our inability to explain the union does not alter the fact. Does not God exhibit a determination and a purpose? Does his providential government halt in dealing with incurable moral evil? Under the unalterable laws of the moral world corruption eats into the vitals both of nations and individuals.

Yet the system of nature presents unquestionable indications of the benevolence of its Author. Is not the provider of boundless enjoyment Himself kind? Is not He who has produced the relationship of parent and child among His creatures, Himself a Father? Yet in His universe exist the famine, the storm, the earthquake, pain, misery and death.

The ancient moralist complained that no thunderbolt struck down the ungodly. The modern philanthropist is deeply pained when he beholds infinite power quiescent, while moral evil pursues its deadly course unchecked. In the created universe the brightness of goodness is often shrouded in the mist of awfulness. From certain depths of moral corruption there is no known backward road. The Evangelists, were therefore right in dramatising in the character of the divine man some of those awful traits which the natural universe discloses respecting the Creator.

But if the Jesus of the Evangelists was conceived of as possessed of superhuman power, how shall we solve the difficulty of the limited action of his benevolence?

In a similar way it may be urged that if he is to be conceived of as a manifestation of that which is divinely good, he ought to exhibit something more than a bare copy of those aspects of Deity which the universe presents to us. If he is conceived of as the source of a special revelation, he ought to have gone beyond this. Otherwise there would be an imperfection in his conception as a divine man.

It is to this aspect of him that the Evangelical drama unquestionably tends. It is its intention to depict its Jesus as a revealer of the Father Almighty beyond any thing which had been previously known of His character.

Accordingly they have advanced beyond nature. They have found a ground where the repellent qualities of holiness and benevolence can meet, which nature does not. In her they exhibit themselves as the opposite poles of character. Such also is the form which they present in ordinary holy men. But the consummation of the Evangelical drama combines these two opposite poles of character in the person of the divine man, by depicting him as making a voluntary surrender of his life as a sacrifice to reconcile God to man and man to God.

— This then is their ultimate solution of the problem. Whether it is the right one, it does not come within our purpose to inquire. It is sufficient that no such solution was ever conceived of before, and that no better has ever been propounded since.

By means of the final drama of the Gospels, the inventors of these myths have endeavoured to exhibit these repellent attributes of benevolence and holiness as celebrating a

marriage union in the person of their Christ. They have depicted him as no less sternly holy than the most immutable of his Father's laws, but as more mild and lovely than the most merciful of his Father's works, or than the tenderest affections with which He has endowed His creatures. But they have done more. By the conception of the great act of self-sacrifice as the end towards which his whole life was tending, they have depicted him as more lovely, more pure, and more kind than the Creator has portrayed Himself in the universe which He has made. Our Lord did not destroy all evil by his power; but to effect its destruction he gave his life. To have represented the Creator as giving Himself for His creatures would have involved the grossest of contradictions. But the Evangelists have depicted the divine man as surrendering himself in complete conformity with the will and purposes of his Father. The free surrender of the spotless life of the Christ is the Evangelical solution of the problem presented to us by nature and by providence.

It will of course be objected that the free surrender of the life of Christ as a sacrifice forms no part of the original conception of the historical Jesus, or even of the Jesus of the primitive myths. We reply that it is not necessary to our argument that it should have done so. It matters not if it be a subsequent addition. We are by no means maintaining that the whole of these conceptions should have been evolved at once. We are quite ready to assume as the ground of our reasoning, that which the supporters of the mythic theory postulate, that these conceptions were only gradually evolved. If the Gospels be mythic, it is very possible that the conception of a self-sacrificing Christ was the last mythical addition. All that we assert is that such a conception was elaborated within the interval of time which the mythic theory postulates for the production of the Synoptics. In fact we can prove that it was in existence at a much earlier period, prior to the time when St. Paul wrote his universally acknowledged epistles.

If then the original myths did not contain this conception, it is evident that prior to their having been incorporated into our Gospels they must have received such additions as to have brought them into harmony with them. Not only is the voluntary act of self-sacrifice positively asserted in

the Synoptic Gospels, but it is evident that their concluding drama is intended to be the crown and key of the whole conception. It is no superaddition to them, but it is essential to their unity as a whole. Without it the Gospels would be a drama devoid of its concluding act. Whether the account of the passion be real or mythical, it was evidently not intended by its authors as a mere idealised or historical portraiture of a martyrdom. As a simple martyrdom it would be easy to dramatise one far more perfect. The martyr is not called on to stand in the attitude of silent submission. One conception runs throughout it, that of a life voluntarily surrendered for the benefit of others in conformity with the supreme will of God. If the account was written from this point of view, it has meaning; if not, many of its details are gratuitous. At any rate it must be conceded that the story, whether real or mythical, has been so drawn as to admit of this view being taken of it, and that this view actually was taken, long before the period assigned by the supporters of the mythic theory for the full elaboration of the Synoptic Gospels, not only by the Apostles Peter and Paul, but by multitudes of Christians of the Pauline and Petrine type. For the purposes of our argument we require no more.

The mythologists have succeeded in delineating their Jesus in an aspect worthy of a dying man. They have arrayed the human Jesus in a superhuman morality. They have faultlessly dramatised him over a wide sphere of action. They have arrayed him not in the heroic but in the humbler virtues. They have solved problems unsolved before, whether the attempt has been made by prophet, poet, or philosopher. Numbers of credulous mythologists, working without concert have arrived at a unanimous solution of the profoundest questions which have agitated the minds of men. They have created a glorious Christ. The supporters of the mythic theory say that no other power was necessary to accomplish this than the self-directed but spontaneous powers of the human mind acting not in obedience to reason, but to impulse. Is this possible?

## CHAPTER V.

## THE MORAL TEACHING OF OUR LORD.

MANY attempts have been made to deny the originality of our Lord's moral teaching, and to show that he made no discoveries in morality. We must therefore carefully investigate the relations in which he is depicted as standing to the moral and spiritual world.

The question before us may be stated thus: In what does our Lord's moral teaching, as it is portrayed in the Gospels, differ from that of all other teachers who have preceded him? Has he succeeded in enlarging the basis of morality, or in creating a power capable of imparting an additional sanction to it? Is his morality worthy of a teacher sent from God?

It must be observed that two distinct questions present themselves in relation to morals. The first is, In what does true morality consist, and what are the motives on which it is based? The second is, How can the moral law be made a living principle in man? It is by their answer to the latter of these questions that the Evangelists have portrayed our Lord as the great moral and religious teacher of mankind. In this his originality consists.

It is remarkable that while the supporters of the mythic theory maintain the utterly unhistorical character of the bulk of our Gospels, many of them are ready to allow that the discourses are substantially correct representations of the general teaching of Jesus. When we consider the difficulty which the principles of the mythic theory impose on the correct transmission of these, this is to make a large demand on our faith. How, in the absence of all really historical documents could they have been correctly handed down? But there is another difficulty in the way of believing that the morality of the Gospels as a whole ever existed in a human Jesus. We shall have occasion hereafter to show that certain portions of our Lord's moral teaching are based on his superhuman character as it is dramatised by the Evangelists.

The objection that various precepts of the Gospel may be



found elsewhere is worthless against his originality as a teacher. Even if every truth which he taught could be found in a separate form in the work of some previous teacher, this would not account for their being blended together in the peculiar aspect in which they are exhibited in the Gospels. Moreover, it is one thing to teach a moral system, and another to impart to it vitality by enforcing it by adequate motives. This our Lord has done, and none other before him. It is here that he stands on an elevation high above all who have preceded him. He has succeeded in creating a new spiritual power, and that power is himself.

No moral teacher could propound precepts entirely new unless morality had not previously existed. But will a moral system grow with a spiritual life which is composed of a shred taken from this quarter, and a patch from that? We might as well conceive it possible to form a living man out of a collection of limbs.

How then shall we describe the difference between the moral teaching of our Lord, and every other previous system of morality? We answer, that our Lord has indissolubly united morality and religion, and has exhibited himself as the source of all moral action, being a new power in the spiritual world supreme above all the natural motives on which moral obligation rests.

What did our Lord propose to accomplish? Not to found a system of morality, but to propound principles of duty which would enable each man to become a law unto himself. He has not subverted the relationship which exists between man and man as the foundation of morals, but he has erected an additional buttress by discovering the relationship which exists between man and God. This he uses as a power to act on man's spiritual nature. In addition to this he has exhibited a model of pure unselfishness in his own perfect life. But he knew that example alone would be powerless to enable man to fulfil the moral law. He has therefore presented himself in the purity of his holiness, and in his unselfish life and death of self-sacrifice, as high above all the motives of morality, thereby exhibiting himself as the rightful King of the human conscience.

There is nothing more remarkable in the Evangelical portraiture of the Christ than the manner in which the humblest of men is depicted as habitually preaching



himself. Never once does a sense arise within him that he is advancing too lofty a claim. Yet this sense of worthiness does not arise from an act of deliberate self-consciousness. It is that of a man who was supremely great, without making his greatness a direct subject of contemplation. This feature of his character runs throughout the entire Gospels, and is indissolubly interwoven with their structure. It is impossible to form any correct estimate of the moral teaching which the Evangelists have attributed to Christ, without taking this element of it into the deepest consideration.

This is so important in reference to our Lord's character as a teacher of morality, that for the purpose of exhibiting our meaning clearly, we must adduce a few examples of it, observing at the same time that it is an essential feature in the whole structure of the Gospels. As it has been falsely asserted to be a peculiarity of St. John's Gospel, we shall make our selection wholly from the Synoptics.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." "He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me." It is impossible to conceive a more unconscious assertion of supreme worthiness than this. There is nothing higher in the fourth Gospel. "Follow me," says Jesus. "Lord, let me first go and bury my father," was the not unreasonable reply on the ordinary principles of morality. "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God," is the claim of one who feels that he has a right to bind the conscience with a tie dearer than the strongest natural relationships. "He that hateth not his father and his mother, his wife and children, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Him that shall confess me before men, I will confess before my Father who is in heaven. Him who shall deny me before men, I will deny before the angels of God." This is only exceeded by one other assertion recorded by the Synoptics. "Sell whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and take up the cross and follow me." Citations of a similar import may be indefinitely multiplied. The same spirit pervades every portion of our Lord's teaching.

Nothing can be more striking than such utterances, unaccompanied as they are with the smallest consciousness of unworthiness or of pride. In what other human teacher, however arrogant, shall we find such pretensions? Monarchs have demanded divine honours, but they have never claimed a spiritual empire over the conscience. What philosopher ever claimed the throne of the human heart as his lawful right? Witness the lowly tones of Socrates. Hear the self-abasement of Paul, exclaiming, "Lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name:" "Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" But Jesus without hesitation seats himself down on the throne of the human heart, as its rightful occupant.

Our Lord does this with a sublime quietude. In no other man would such an assumption wear anything but the appearance of arrogance. His sense of worthiness seems like an intuition. How beautifully consistent with the character of him who was the light of the world, is the invitation to the weary and heavy laden to come to him for rest. But how monstrous would that invitation sound if put into the mouth of any other teacher of morality with whom we are acquainted. Let us conceive of Socrates, as saying, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." But our Lord as a teacher is depicted as feeling within him a greatness greater than every other obligation; and when he claims the Lordship of the human heart, the purest, the wisest, and the best, have joined in the exclamation, "Worthy is the Lamb."

Now on what is this claim founded? Is it just? We answer, it is founded on his possessing the divine character assigned him by the Evangelists. He is there uniformly portrayed not as a man like ourselves, but as a divine man. As such, he could surrender his life for men. As such he could rise to be the object of their supremest love. He therefore is worthy to put in the claim, that whether they live, they should live to him, and whether they die, they should die to him. God claims to reign over man as his Creator and Preserver. But Christ was able to surrender his life for man in an act of self-sacrificing love. He can say to the heart in which all other feelings are powerless or dead, "I died for thee: Live then to me." He there-

fore can vindicate the human heart to himself by a claim compared with which all others are feeble.

Now the creation of this spiritual power is precisely that which man requires. The law of morality, to use the language of St. Paul, was weak through the flesh. Its sanctions were powerless to struggle against appetite and passion. You might tell the darkened soul of the beauty of holiness, and exhibit to it the sanctions of duty, but it was like announcing the glories of light to those who had never seen, or the sweetness of harmony to those into whose ears sound had never entered. How were impure passions to become pure? Philosophy answered, By the performance of pure and holy acts. How were holy acts to be performed by the unholy? Philosophy was silent. Philosophers had portrayed the idea of perfect states and constitutions; but the ideal refused to become the actual. They created moral systems, but could not impart to them vitality. But Jesus not only taught men what is right, but created a motive in his own person powerful to make it live in the hearts of men. That motive is his divine attractiveness.

While our Lord created a new motive he did not intend to supersede, but to strengthen and supplement the old. He has therefore in the course of his teaching appealed to every motive which can be brought to bear on man's moral nature, man's desire for happiness, natural conscience, enlightened self-love. Nor has he overlooked the higher principles of motivity; man's sense of the beautiful and the fair; the beauty of disinterested holiness, the equity of the moral law, and the power of truth. He has disclosed the responsibility of man, and unfolded to his eyes the doctrine of a future state of retribution. He has strengthened the moral power by resting it on the authority of God our Creator, and appealed to the tenderest feelings of humanity to enforce his goodness. He has taught man to imitate God, to love Him because He is lovely, and to look up to Him with the obedient spirit of a child, and not to render Him the service of a slave. To these motives he imparts strength, by exhibiting his own glorious personality in all its unselfish loveliness. He tells us to contemplate it steadily, and it will kindle life in the human bosom. By his death he appeals to every member

of the human family, and says, "I have redeemed thee to God by my blood." By his resurrection he claims that life which he has rescued to be consecrated in a devoted service to himself.

This divine motive is not only theoretically perfect, but it has wrought an influence more mighty than any which has operated on the human heart. Those who refuse to acknowledge the divine origin of the Gospels cannot help admitting the effects which the belief in the death and resurrection of our Lord have produced in the spiritual and moral world. To the extent of this influence the history of Christianity is a living witness.

But it will be objected, such is not the actual exhibition of our Lord's moral teaching, as it is depicted in the Gospels.

We reply that before our Lord actually died, it was impossible that his death could be exhibited as a motive. We cannot therefore expect this view of it to be explicitly taught in them. But we find there fully exhibited the supreme attractiveness of our Lord's person as the ground of spiritual and moral action; and his death is set forth as the act of the highest interest in connection with his mission. He directly contemplated his death as the consummation of his work, and out of it Christianity as a system, powerful to affect the human heart, has subsequently emerged. The whole truth is involved in our Lord's habitual self-assertion. He claims to be man's Lord in virtue of the inherent glories of his character.

We must survey a few of the leading traits of our Lord's moral teaching.

Our Lord exhibits the ideal of morality in his own practice. The most important feature of this consists in the entire abnegation of all reference to self as a motive to action. We have already observed that a prudential regard for the interests of self forms no portion of the morality which the Evangelists have ascribed to Jesus. The only place where we see the remotest trace of such reference is in the prayer for glorification which St. John has put into his mouth. But even this, if it be a reference to self, is represented as caused by his supreme desire for the glory of his Father. The divine goodness, holiness, and purity, as embodied in the determination of the will

of God, form in the Christ of the Gospels the good pleasure with which his whole moral and spiritual being coincided, and to which his lower or human will instantly submitted. The embodiments of the divine will formed the only spring of his moral action.

We do not mean to deny that our Lord perceived intuitively the beauty of holy action, and rested on it with infinite complacency. But with him the impelling cause to duty was his Father's will. There is only one passage in the whole New Testament where the contrary seems to be implied. Our version of the Epistle to the Hebrews represents a sense of the joy set before him as at least one of his predominant motives for the endurance of the cross. But even this apparent contradiction at once disappears if we render the preposition *ἀντὶ* by its natural meaning, "instead of" and not "for."\*

But while this forms the basis of morality in our Lord himself, the Evangelists have not represented him as propounding it as the one foundation of morals for imperfect men. He has taught his followers that the attainment of his own moral perfection ought to be their ultimate aim; but he has not disdained to appeal to the instincts of even an enlightened self-love to add force to moral action. He has invoked every motive which can act on man's moral nature to enable him to struggle against his imperfections.

It is a remarkable feature in the Gospels that they do not propound a moral code. They only propound great principles by means of which the Christian is to become a law to himself. These principles are frequently laid down in the form of precepts of a very startling character, for the purpose of showing that literal obedience to them as bare rules of practice was not the thing intended. All

\* The difficulty may be avoided if we refer *κατὰ* to our Lord's joy in the salvation of men, which invokes a feeling of infinite benevolence; but it seems hardly possible that the preposition *ἀντὶ* can be used to denote the impelling motive to action. It has been urged that the word *προκειμένης* precludes the possibility of the reference being to our Lord's glory previous to the incarnation. It need not refer to anything else than the happiness which our Lord in his incarnation would have enjoyed, if he had not laid down his life, which he declares to have been entirely in his own power.



such precepts presuppose the general principle that the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

The morality of the Gospels presents us with no enactments which having served their purpose are afterwards superseded by fresh legislation. In this they stand out in marked contrast to the legislation of Moses.

No less do they clearly distinguish between morality and physical law. Man's morality is untrammelled by the laws of his physical being. No force external to his will can make him either the better or the worse. Nothing from without by entering into him can defile him. The freedom of the will is recognised, and where there is no freedom, there can be no guilt.

Their authors have represented our Lord as clearly distinguishing between political and absolute morality. The Gospels are free from a single attempt at temporal legislation. Our Lord by one pregnant saying has pronounced the human conscience free from the dominion of the state. "Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." By this decree the King of the Church has declared all external power an usurpation, when it attempts to bind the human conscience, a power which the visible Church has ever been too inclined to grasp.

No moral teacher appeared before our Lord who did not attempt to embody his precepts in a system of political legislation, or who would not have done so if he had had the power.

In all these aspects our Lord, as a moral teacher, bears the distinct impress of originality.

Again, the Evangelists have never once dramatised our Lord as discussing what morality, virtue, or holiness is. He assumes that they are perfectly known to himself. In this aspect his character is absolutely unique among teachers of morality.

Benevolence, holiness, justice, forgiveness of injuries, and humility are the pole stars of Gospel morality. Its seat is in the heart. External formalism, destitute of inward purity, is the lowest form of spiritual degeneracy.

Our Lord has widened the extent of the law of love, and placed it on a new basis.

The Old Testament had taught that all the obligations



which were due from one Israelite to another might be summed up in the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In place of the word Israelite, represented in the old commandment by the word neighbour, our Lord substituted mankind.

The practical law of morality has always been, I will do to you, as you have done to me; and mankind have generally esteemed this standard fair. But enlightened reason may have been able to propound the sum of the old law, "Whatever ye would that men should do to you, the same do to them," as the true principle of action. We do not dispute that a glimpse of the truth of this rule was attained by some ancient speculators; but of all power to enforce it they were destitute.

But our Lord gave a new extension to the moral law, and enforced it by a principle essentially his own. The old commandment measures the duty of loving our neighbour by our own self-love. A direct act of self-consciousness therefore is involved in every application of the standard. This reference to self forms its essential defect. Moreover, it might be urged that in proportion as our self-love is deficient, we are absolved from the duty of loving others.

Our Lord has conceived the idea of measuring the duty of loving others, not by an internal but an external standard. He has therefore propounded not our love to ourselves, but his love to us as the measure of the extent of the duty.

The Old Commandment rested on the reasonableness of the duty as the motive for enforcing it. The weakness of this motive was habitually overborne by the violence of human passion. The mind recognised that the duty was a reasonable one, and forgot it. Our Lord, when he gave the New Commandment, presented to the mind the full glories of his own divine person and character, as the motive for its fulfilment.

The New Commandment, therefore, "Love one another as I have loved you," contains within it both the measure of the duty, and the motive for enforcing it.

Our Lord is the one solitary person in human history who was capable of uttering the New Commandment, and making it an actuality. If it had proceeded from an

ordinary man, instead of widening the rule of duty it would have narrowed it. Our love to self would have assigned a far wider limit to the duty than our love to others. In the mouth of an ordinary man it would have been self-condemned by his own selfishness. The unselfish love of Jesus has alone rendered its utterance possible. The conception of such a thought presupposes the existence of such a Christ as is dramatised in the Gospels, and the importance of his death as the crowning feature in the representation.

Nor could any other but the divine man have imparted to it an atom of motive power. That motive power is centered in the freedom and the perfection of that love which he manifested in living, and at last dying, for man. The New Commandment, therefore, and the Evangelical portraiture of the divine man stand to each other in a mutual correlation. The one gives life to the other. Without the one the other is nothing.

But supposing the legislator, in forming the conception of the New Commandment, had made the divine character, instead of his own, the measure and motive of duty, what would have been the result? He might have said, "Love one another as God has loved you. Make the divine conduct in creation and providence the measure of your duty to man."

While Creation contains the most unquestionable indications of the goodness of its Author, as we have already observed, it has other aspects of mysterious awfulness. It may be well to teach that man should imitate his Maker. But the question at once arises, Is man to imitate Him in His benevolent character only? Must he not also imitate Him as the author of invariable law? If he measures his duties by the benevolence of God, why should he not also appeal to the awful character which He wears in Providence?

History proves that this danger is no visionary one. When men have measured their obligations by their own imperfect views of the attributes of the Deity, they have taken their sterner rather than their benevolent aspects for their rule. The Gods of the ancient world were no subjects fit for human imitation. Nor is the Deity of the

modern philosopher more suited, when he presents the embodied aspect of inexorable fate. Providence permits a ship to sink to the bottom of the ocean, and no aiding hand is near, but all is stern and terrible. Its undeviating laws bend not. Are these dark and mysterious aspects of Deity to be the subjects of human imitation? The Evangelists have responded to the question by presenting to us Jesus.

Our Lord, therefore, has effected in morality what none other but himself could have accomplished. He has prescribed a new rule. He has created a new motive, and that motive is himself.

An immense distance separates our Lord's moral teaching from that of all other men. Compared with that of all who preceded him it presents the widest catholicity of view. The Jew was a brother to the Jew; but he admitted no obligations to the alien or the schismatic. The legislator recognised a brotherhood between citizens. At the utmost he extended it only to men of the same race and language. Beyond this boundary, the limits of obligation ceased. Even within it, where there was no treaty, it was lawful to plunder, to enslave, and to kill. The philosopher recognised a brotherhood between the enlightened and the elevated, but where were the degraded, the slave, and the barbarian? But Jesus compelled the narrow sectarian to admit that the law of love included within its obligations the outcast. Is my neighbour the Priest, the Levite, or the Jew? He is all these. But the merciful Pariah is also neighbour to the man of the purest blood; the despised schismatic to the member of the most orthodox Church. My neighbour is neither my fellow sectarian, nor my fellow countryman, nor my fellow Churchman, nor even my fellow-philanthropist, but man in need. He is every one whom Jesus Christ has loved, for whom he has lived, and to redeem whom he has died.

The benevolence which dwelt in Jesus has transferred itself into the hearts of his disciples. Christianity has pursued the miserable and the outcast to the ends of the earth in obedience to the new law, and animated by the divine motive.

The interval which separates such an aspect of teaching

from the state of Jewish thought and feeling out of which it must have originated, is profound. Yet the mythic theory represents the one as directly growing out of the other.

But while our Lord is perfect himself he has not forgotten that he is dealing with imperfection. While he has created a new spiritual power, he has reinforced it by every other motive which can act on the human heart. "Those that mourn," says he, "shall be comforted; the meek shall inherit the earth; the pure in heart shall see God; the merciful shall obtain mercy." He points out the unsatisfying nature of sin, the certainty of a judgment to come, and the great truth of man's immortality. Every motive which acts on the human spirit he has employed in erecting his spiritual temple, assigning to each its proper place. He himself is the topmost stone.

Another aspect of our Lord's moral teaching distinguishes him from all his predecessors. He has effected a great revolution in morality by assigning the highest place to the milder and the more unobtrusive virtues, and the lowest to the heroic ones. Some of these latter he has left unnoticed, while every portion of his teaching assigns prominence to the former. The Evangelists moreover, have not only represented our Lord as preaching this to others, but in their dramatised portraiture of him, they have exhibited it with matchless perfection in his person.

This is worthy of particular observation. It stands in marked contrast to the ideas of the ancient world. The opposite character was the ideal of the Jewish saint. It certainly formed no portion of the moral atmosphere in the midst of which Christianity originated. Yet it forms the foundation stone of the spiritual temple which Jesus has erected to the glory of his Father. Other moral teaching, if it has recognised the existence of any of these virtues, has assigned to them the subordinate place. The wisest and the best of men have since, with almost unanimous voice, pronounced our Lord right, and the moralists wrong. The greatness of the change which he has thus effected in the relative estimate of different virtues may be described by saying, that he has made the last first, and the first last.

Another of the most striking features in our Lord's teaching consists in the union which he has effected between morality and religion.

It has often been urged as an objection to religion that a moral system may be constructed without any reference to its sanctions. This must be possible as long as man can feel the obligations of duty, or recognise the pure, the beautiful, and the true. The independent existence of morality on a basis of its own, can only be denied by those who assert that man is devoid of a moral nature. Until man has sunk to the lowest level, the moral faculty cannot help perceiving that the precept which requires us to do to others as we would have others act towards us is reasonable.

But the objection overlooks the point at issue. It is not a question whether a moral system can be erected on an independent basis, but whether it supplies a motive sufficiently powerful to overcome the resistance of the various appetites. Even in the best of men the sense of obligation is weak to resist their power. In inferior natures the force of passion is overwhelming.

The objects of religion and morality therefore are distinct. Morality determines what is right. Religion furnishes the motive power to make morality a practical reality.

The only religion prior to our Lord which had attempted to effect a real union between religion and morality was Judaism. It is very doubtful whether the doctrine of a future state as taught by the old pagan religions exerted any influence in restraining evil in man. They never preached any real doctrine of human responsibility. The ideal of the Deity which these religions presented for man's contemplation, had rather a tendency to degrade than to elevate him. In them, religion and morality were not only distinct, but frequently stood in direct opposition.

Judaism had attempted to unite them, but its materials were imperfect. It represented God as the all holy, but not as the all lovely. It taught man's responsibility, but diminished the power of that doctrine by representing that the holy man was rewarded and the vicious punished in the present life. The prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the good was frequently a bitter trial to the



conscientious Jew. A future state of retribution is never used in the Old Testament as a sanction to enforce the moral law. The character of most Jewish saints presents us with some feature of direful imperfection. It was known to be a duty to love one's neighbour as oneself, but the practice of the Jew may be frequently traced in stains of blood.

Beyond the bounds of Judaism the union of religion and morality, instead of elevating man as a moral being had degraded him. What Deity of man's invention has exhibited the moral law in his conduct or as engraved on his heart? Instead of doing so, he was an embodiment of human appetite on a scale of vastness.

Men's previous attempts to incorporate religion with morality, and to strengthen the motive power of the latter by appealing to the obligations of the former had failed. It was in vain to hope that the God who violated its obligations in his own person would be a vindicator of its sanctions in others. Such was the popular Deity of the pagan. The doctrines taught respecting him contained no motive to strengthen the weakness of the feeling of moral obligation. The God of the philosophers was neither a person, a moral being, or a Father. Between such a being and man there existed neither sympathies nor obligations. He was an impersonality utterly remote from the regions of duty or morality.

The failure of all previous attempts to incorporate religion and morality is a proof of the extreme difficulty of the problem. But the authors of the Gospels have given it an effectual solution in their representation of our Lord as bringing to bear the whole of the motive power of religion on man's moral being by making a revelation of his Father and himself.

He reveals God as man's Creator, but above all as his Father. He proclaims Him to be true, loving, pure, and just. He desires the happiness of man. Our duties to God are the centre of obligation. He is the vindicator of violated law, and will render to every man according to his works.

Out of our relationships to God flow our obligations to man. Morality exists in God. Man is therefore bound by the ties which unite him to God, to fulfil the moral law to



man. Morality emanates from God as the supreme legislator. The relations which bind man to God bind man to man. Be thou holy, for I, thy gracious Creator and Father, am holy. Conscience says that the golden rule of duty which ought to unite man to man is just. Christ reinforces that obligation by revealing the existence of a common brotherhood among men, derived from a common Fatherhood in God. From every relationship in which Christ reveals the Father as standing to man, he deduces a fresh obligation of duty binding man to man.

But the relationship between God and man was one already existing, though unknown. This relationship our Lord discovered and brought to bear on the human conscience. But the Evangelists have conceived the thought of representing him as creating a new relationship between God and man in his own person. He not only reveals God to man, but God in man.

This discovery is only rendered possible by the conception of the incarnation, by means of which the Evangelists have centred all the claims which God exerts on man in the person of Christ. They have added to these claims those which man exerts on man, by representing him not as divine only, but as human. They have also created a motive power to holy obedience, such as the claims of neither nature taken separately can supply. The divine man lived and died and rose again for man. This divine and human act in Christ has created the correlative duty in man of willing subjection to him as his sovereign Lord. It has generated in the spiritual world a power which previously did not exist, that of constraining love.

Such then is the great power of spiritual motivity which the authors of the Gospels have depicted. This thought underlies their entire structure, and is the foundation on which the superstructure of Christianity rests. To every race and condition of men, and to every state of the human heart, it forms a Gospel which announces that amelioration is possible for man; that the degraded need no longer continue in their degradation; that he who is struggling with evil need no longer be overwhelmed by the difficulties of the contest; that there is a means of return to holiness open even for the outcast and the profligate.

gate; that nothing is wanting for the elevation of every member of the human family but a willingness to have the divine man to reign over him.

The greatness of the success is best illustrated by a consideration of the failure of all previous efforts to create anything like an adequate spiritual motivity. The most civilized races of men had for ages past been striving to answer the question how the decrees of conscience were to be enforced. It held the supreme place in man's moral constitution, but it was a sovereign who could decree but not enforce. Every expedient had been tried to invest its decisions with commanding obligation. Man, said some, must be elevated by a course of habituation to higher and higher degrees of excellence. But where could a foundation be found for commencing the work in the profligate and the debased? The principle of habituation is a plant of slow growth. How was it to struggle into existence against the force of powerful appetites and passions already enthroned in the bosom? Those already virtuous might be elevated, but how was it to breathe life into the spiritually dead? Another said, Preach the beauty of disinterested holiness, and the happiness of realising the ends of man's moral being. But such a voice was drowned by the overwhelming vehemence of passion. If these expedients fail, try the effect of mortifying the body, the seat of lust and sin. But the body refused to be mortified, and too often the attempts to degrade it degraded the man. But the uneducated peasants who invented the Gospels, have portrayed one who has created a new power in the spiritual world, by bringing the sanctions of religion to bear on man's moral nature, and by presenting himself as the supreme Lord claiming to reign by the bonds of disinterested love.

To the objection that this teaching is not fully dramatised in the Gospels, we reply that it was impossible to have done so, until after our Lord's death and resurrection. It is the obvious meaning of that most remarkable trait of self-assertion in the portraiture of the humble Jesus, such as could not have been possible in any other man. It is the consummation of the greatest of their dramas, the scenes of the crucifixion, which is intended to exhibit the supremest act of love, and of the resurrection, which presents him to us as the supreme Lord of the Church.

No less unique are the means on which the Evangelists have represented our Lord as relying to effectuate his great work in the spiritual world. It was one which had been unthought of before him. The medicine by which the Physician of souls attempts to heal the diseases of man's moral nature is faith. All previous reformers had attempted to act on him through the principle of habituation. A few philosophers, like Plato, had recommended the contemplation of the abstract ideas of the holy and the beautiful as an instrument of spiritual elevation. The power to do this was the special privilege of the few. They never dreamt of it as an instrument to be employed for the elevation of mankind in general. But our Lord propounded as the special remedy for all spiritual disease, not the contemplation of an idea, but faith in his own divine person.

Our Lord is made expressly to disclaim the possession of any secret doctrine like that of the ancient philosophers. He had not one truth for the multitude, and another for a select class of disciples. Faith, in our Lord's view, is the one remedy for all the spiritual diseases of man. Faith, with him, presents itself under two aspects, a trustful acquiescence in his divine person and character, and a cordial surrender of the heart to the great truths which he taught. A philosopher understood no acquiescence in truth apart from the demonstrations of reason. Our Lord was satisfied if belief rested on his own authority.

The principle of habituation is one which exercises a most powerful influence over the human character. Within certain limits habit has made man what he is. By constantly doing actions of a certain kind we become of a corresponding character. An action is more easily performed by repetition. By doing what is holy, just, and pure, the power to perform such actions is strengthened. The successful bridling of an appetite gives us a more easy victory over it the next time it tempts us. Equally powerful is its influence where sinful appetites prevail, in increasing their force and power. By habitual indulgence man sinks into a lower and lower state. There is no portion of our moral being over which the principle does not exert an influence. It is a most mysterious power, and the only one with which natural morality is acquainted, which is able to effect considerable changes in the character.

Powerful as is this principle, our Lord is rarely depicted as alluding to it, and never once using it as his instrument for the moral renovation of mankind.

Its mode of working is slow. It never acts like an enthusiasm on the human spirit. It resembles those gradual operations of nature by which the hardest substances are worn down. It is, therefore, powerless to resist the vehement impulses of passion, and unfit to be employed as the instrument of conversion. Its power arises out of the gradual accretions of little and little. Such an influence is too slow to transform the sinner into the saint.

Our Lord and the moral teacher have pursued two opposite courses. The moralist relies on habituation—our Lord on faith. The moralist begins with the act; through the act he hopes gradually to purify the principles, and, through the agency of the principles, finally to affect the intellect. Our Lord begins with the intellectual conviction; through it he penetrates to the affections, and by them he operates on the outward actions.

The Old Testament was acquainted with the power of habituation. Why has our Lord ignored the teaching both of the prophet and of the philosopher?

Our Lord had not to deal with unformed characters, but with those in whom the principles of evil were already deeply sunk. Man was in want of a moral and spiritual resurrection. The principle of habituation was too slow in its action. Passion was more than its match, and refused to give it any vantage ground whereon to erect its lever. Man is not like nature, which admits of being acted on through an indefinite course of ages. The only means of redeeming him was to create a power which would stir the lowest depths of his being. Our Lord came to be a revolutionist in the spiritual and moral worlds.

If our Lord had attempted to act through the agency of this principle, it would have been necessary that he should have armed himself with outward coercive power. The power of evil must be restrained somehow before the principle of habituation can be set at work for the generation of good. Evil can readily discipline itself to evil, and good to good; but how is the one to be made suddenly to change into the other? Before a bad man can be disciplined to good an external power must be provided to aid

him to pursue the right course of action. Had our Lord attempted to reform men by the power of this principle, he must have instituted a society, the sole object of which would have been to enforce a course of holy discipline on its members. They must have been made the subject of rule and law. But even if this mode of action had been possible law would not have succeeded in generating love. The free action of the human soul would have perished in the process.

It follows, therefore, that the only road through which those whose moral power is weak and whose appetites are strong, can be reached, is through the representations of the understanding being made to react on the affections. A state of weakness, if not of advanced spiritual degeneracy, is the condition of the mass of mankind. But it was this class which our Lord came to call to repentance. The great truths which he exhibited in his person were powerful on the righteous, but it was in reference to sinners that the great plan of his work was formed.

Such characters require their whole being to be revolutionized. This result can only be produced by bringing a great truth previously unknown to bear on their minds. This may kindle into a living flame something dormant but not extinguished. When such an affection is awakened, it can call into existence a spiritual power mighty to wrestle with the most powerful corruptions of the human heart. Our Lord, therefore, did not appeal to the power of habit but to the intellect in man. The conviction which he sought to generate, partly intellectual and partly moral, he designated faith.

It is through the intellect alone that the morally corrupt can be reached. By it new thoughts, new ideas, and new motives can be presented to the mind; a lovely object, previously unknown, is able to produce sensations to which it has hitherto been a stranger. But the bare intellectual conception is not motive. To generate it the intellect must strike a corresponding chord in our spiritual nature. The continued contemplation of the object produces sanctification. In the words of St. Paul, the beholding the glory of the Lord changes us into the same image from glory to glory.

Our Lord, therefore, insists in his teaching on the pre-



eminent necessity of faith. The production of it was the end of all his efforts. He pronounced spiritual life to reside in his person. He taught that the cordial acceptance of himself would generate it in man. The result has been the creation of the Christian Church.

The idea of faith, as the foundation of living Christianity, is no accidental feature, but is of the essence of the Gospels. It is the representation of the fourth Gospel, it is the representation of the Synoptics. It characterises alike the portions alleged to be legendary or mythical, and those which the maintainers of the theory we are combatting, admit to be historical.

The student of the Gospels cannot help being struck with another peculiar feature which they present. Our Lord's progress in the enlightenment and elevation of his followers is described as having been a slow one.

Nothing is more unlikely than, if the Gospels are unhistorical, that their authors would have represented our Lord's progress with his disciples as one of so gradual a character. Such a description was the last thing which would be likely to exalt him in the eyes of those for whom they wrote. Living, as they are said to have done, surrounded by a miraculous atmosphere, nothing was more natural than that they should have represented all obstacles as bending before him in the spiritual world. That they have not done so is an obvious fact. His labours were incessant. Up to the time of his death he seems to have had only five hundred professed disciples. He had scattered widely the seeds of eternal life, but although they might have taken root they had not yet fructified.

Have the mythologists done rightly in dramatising our Lord as having gained but a moderate success during his public ministry, notwithstanding the temptation they were under to have given a contrary representation? We answer, his great crowning act of self-sacrifice, by which alone he anticipated that he should draw all men to him, had not yet been accomplished; during his ministry, therefore, he was not manifested in the fulness of his power in the spiritual world.

If such was the idea of the Evangelists nothing can be more properly conceived than this representation. Otherwise it is utterly incredible that creators of myths, intent



on his glorification, should have so drawn him, when it would have been equally easy to surround him with crowds of devoted friends. If then the mythologists unanimously developed his portraiture on this principle, we must again endeavour to account for it by the aid of the principle of spontaneous impulse. That is the power with which the mythologist acts in the spiritual world.

The rapidity of the advance of Christianity during the three years which followed the resurrection compares in a remarkable manner with the slowness of the progress during the three years which preceded it. If the Gospels are fictitious it seems a strange way of glorifying their hero to represent the success of his personal labours small, and that the success of his followers became a triumph. But there was a great truth in the back-ground; and it is certainly most wonderful that the authors of the myths should have laboured in the strictest conformity with its unseen laws. By his death and resurrection our Lord became Lord of the dead and living. They have therefore not depicted his success as great until he equipped himself in the armour which enabled him to go forth conquering and to conquer in the spiritual world.

It is also worthy of particular remark that the Evangelists have in no single instance depicted our Lord during the whole course of his ministry as infringing the laws of the spiritual world by an exertion of power.

Man's moral and spiritual nature is regulated by laws widely different from those which prevail in the material universe. The agency which acts on our moral and spiritual being is motive, not power. The moment we conceive of power employed to coerce the action of a moral intelligence we destroy his free agency. Power is the force which moves the material, motive is that which impels the spiritual world.

This is a great philosophic truth. But the authors of the Gospels have depicted our Lord as invariably recognising and observing it.

This is very remarkable, because he is represented as acting on men's bodies by means which we designate miraculous. To state the case broadly: while our Lord is always represented in the Gospels as curing diseases by a power which over-rules the ordinary course of nature, he

is never once depicted as invoking the aid of a supernatural power to cure the diseases of the soul. In the natural world he supersedes, in the spiritual world he acts in conformity with law.

The fact is quite independent of any view which we may take as to the nature of a miracle. It will not be affected whether a miracle be the result of the direct agency of the supreme will suspending the ordinary laws of nature, or of a higher law called into operation and adjusted to the circumstances of the case by a wisdom exceeding that of man. In whatever way we explain a miracle, the facts, as they appear on the pages of the Gospels, will remain unaffected. They uniformly depict our Lord as acting in the spiritual world on a different principle from that which he adopts in the physical. He works independently of the ordinary laws of the one. With those of the other he invariably acts in conformity.

The only apparent exception to this rule is the case of the demoniacs. It is worth while to inquire whether it really is an exception.

Those who resolve the phenomena of possession into madness, will at once concede that it is a physical disease. If it were such, it was evidently a proper subject for the exercise of that power with which our Lord controlled nature.

But if the authors of the Gospels considered it as caused by the action of a spiritual power, then evidently it was the result of a power interfering with the free action of the human will. It was that of a spiritual being exercising a usurped dominion over a similar nature. The present condition of the demoniac might have been superinduced by a previous state of sin; still it was that of a moral being deprived by external violence of his free agency. Our Lord, by an act of power, liberated the prisoner and set the moral agent free.

If this view of demoniacal possession be correct, the demon did what our Lord always declined to do. He controlled the free agency of man by the exertion of power. As such the Evangelists have rightly represented the demoniac as a proper subject for the exercise of that superhuman power which resided in our Lord.

One of the chief reasons for treating the Gospels as

unhistorical, is that they are full of the miraculous. It is alleged that their authors were ignorant of the truth that nature works by invariable laws, and knew nothing of their stability. The atmosphere in which they lived teemed with stories of the miraculous. In their ignorance they have freely invested their Jesus with a wonder-working power. They saw proofs of divine power everywhere, and had not the smallest idea that its exercise was limited by law. Miracles were in their eyes signs, wonders, prodigies, but not deviations from law.

But the reign of law prevails no less universally in the moral and spiritual, than in the physical world; although while men learn at a comparatively early period to recognise the dominion of law over the physical universe it is one of the latest discoveries that its authority extends within the regions of the human soul. Yet while the Evangelists were without an idea of law in the physical universe, they must somehow have learned the truth, that it exerts absolute sway in the spiritual and moral; for otherwise it is evident that the same tendencies which induced them habitually to represent their Christ as exercising a power superior to the ordinary laws of nature, would have equally induced them to represent him as exerting a similar power over the laws of spirit, which as we have seen, they have never done.

Let us illustrate what we mean. The Evangelists have repeatedly dramatised our Lord as curing disease by a word. "I will," says he, "be thou clean." And the leprosy is healed. "Take up thy bed and walk," and the paralytic obeys. "According to your faith be it unto you," and the blind man sees. Throughout the whole course of his ministry he is never once represented as having recourse to ordinary means for the cure of disease, though many out of the multitudes who were cured by him could have been doubtless relieved by human skill. Even in that age and country physicians were not unknown, and the rudest nations had acquired some knowledge of that divine art.

While the Evangelists have again and again represented our Lord as making men's bodies every whit whole, they have never once depicted him as performing the same office for the soul. Never once is he represented as saying even to a soul which was struggling with its infirmities and

passions, "I will, be thou liberated from thy bonds." In the spiritual world he always works by suitable means, or in other words, in subserviency to those laws which the Creator has established as supreme over the human mind.

Yet the cure of souls was our Lord's appropriate work. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. In accordance with this character the Gospels have depicted him as labouring with untiring energy at the work of the enlightenment and cure of human spirits. Great are the obstacles which he encounters, and painfully slow is the progress of his work. His opponents grieved him by their wickedness, his disciples by their stupidity; and he is described as wondering at men's unbelief and hardness of heart. But never once is he represented as putting forth his supernatural power for the cure of spiritual disease. Nowhere are opponents described as suddenly converted into disciples by a bare act of power; nowhere is ignorance suddenly irradiated without the use of means; nowhere is the mind, bitterly struggling between good and evil, and in danger of being overwhelmed, miraculously freed from the dangers of the conflict. The process of curing souls is at best but a slow one, and the Evangelists have made no exception to this rule, even when the physician is a teacher come from God. On the contrary, he labours at the work of teaching and instructing with a patience absolutely untiring. A word from him might have been as potent to cure spiritual as it was to cure natural blindness. But that word was never spoken. On the contrary, he continues teaching and exhorting.

This law of our Lord's action in the spiritual world is worthy of our deepest attention. It is the more remarkable because, with all our knowledge of the reign of law, we have attained but an imperfect appreciation of it. Much dogmatic teaching is founded on the belief that the contrary is the fact. But no amount of grief for the hardness of men's hearts, or desire to accomplish his work, or weariness occasioned by it, could induce him to do otherwise. He adopts means strictly moral and spiritual to lead the earnest inquirer into the road to salvation. Faith he is nowhere depicted as creating, but where it is weak or dormant he uses the proper means to awaken and strengthen it. Even where trials threaten to overwhelm the strength of his dearest friends, prayer and the strengthening

utterance is the only remedy which he invokes. "Simon, sleepest thou?" "Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation." "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren."

The great act of self-sacrifice, which forms the close of our Lord's life on earth, affords the strongest proof that the Evangelists recognised the reign of law in the spiritual world. It was an act necessary for the redemption of man. It was the fulfilment of a divine purpose. This very necessity and purpose proves a reign of law. It was the fulfilment of the conditions which the self-imposed laws of the Creator had rendered necessary. We are wholly unable to judge whether, consistently with those laws, God could have accomplished it by other means had He so chosen. He has created man subject to the condition that this was the necessary instrument for his redemption. The Creator might certainly have invoked His almighty power, and had He so chosen, recreated man. But instead of doing so, He has limited His own working in the spiritual world to His own appointed laws. The Evangelists have depicted our Lord as fully recognising the existence of this reign of law, and working in subordination to its conditions. "If it be possible," says he, "let this cup pass from me."

How are we to account for this most singular fact that the Evangelists have never depicted our Lord as attempting to exert his superhuman power on the spiritual world? Has their power to invent wonders failed them suddenly? Or while they were ignorant that nature works by invariable laws, had they attained the knowledge that the laws of the spiritual world are not subject to mutability? Or was our Lord indifferent to the cure of spiritual disease? Nay, it was the end for which he came.

A great truth lay at the bottom of this, though one which had at that time obtained little recognition. Motive is the only agency by which man's moral and spiritual nature can be acted on. The whole apparatus of power contradicts the very idea of a moral agent. That is founded on freedom. Without freedom there is no morality. But power subverts that freedom in which the action of a moral being consists, and which forms the essential distinction between it, and those which are bound by the links of physical causation.



If therefore our Lord had attempted to work miracles on men's souls, in the same manner in which he wrought cures on their bodies, he would have subverted the end for which he came. Instead of elevating man he would have degraded him. Physical miracles have their difficulties, but do not involve contradictions which moral and spiritual miracles involve.

If the Gospels are unhistorical, nothing is more remarkable than the dramatic power which their authors have displayed in this portion of our Lord's portraiture. That men who were ignorant of the reign of law should have depicted him as never employing ordinary remedies in the cure of men's bodies, and never once calling in the aid of miraculous power to cure their souls, is little less astonishing than some of the miracles which they relate.

Such is the Jesus of the Gospels. For the revelation of a divine teacher good men had sighed, philosophers had despaired, prophets had longed and providences had prepared the way; but if the portraiture of Jesus be a human invention, the honour of it is due neither to prophet, poet, priest, nor philosopher, but to a body of Galilean peasants. They went on elaborating myth after myth, and the result has been that by a number of unconnected efforts they have elaborated the conception and portraiture of the Jesus of the Gospels. They have created that great spiritual power which has created the Christian Church.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LAW OF OUR RELIGIOUS AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT.

IN considering the question of the historical character of the Gospels it will be necessary to examine the nature of those laws which regulate developments in the spiritual and moral world. If the Gospels are unhistorical, they must be developments out of previously existing states of thought and feeling. All such changes must be the result of fixed and definite laws. If the interval which separates the Gospels from that state of mind out of which they sprung is a great one, this inquiry becomes one of the



highest importance in reference to our argument. Can such progressions be brought about by a sudden leap, or do they follow the gradual laws of development which prevail in the world of life? It is an admitted truth that creation follows a rule of law, whatever view we may take of the direct agency by which it has been effected. This is not altered, whether we consider creation as the result of the direct action of the Creator's will, without the intervention of means; or assume that its different evolutions have taken place by the agency of laws working in subordination to purpose. Whichever be the correct view, it is certain that the order of creation follows a definite course. In the case of animal life each advancing species is separated from that which preceded it by a narrow interval. The chain is not only a succession of links, but one in which the progressive lengthening of them is very gradual. Nature goes on step by step, and never by a sudden revolution of order, produces a higher type out of one indefinitely lower in the scale. The lower type is the first form of life. The highest in the scale is produced after a long series of progressions and by a succession of graduated steps.

This law, by which the Creator has limited his action in creation, He has imposed on the human mind as the law of its action and development. Every mental change is regulated by a law which cannot be broken. The higher forms of civilization are gradually produced. They never suddenly emerge out of the lower. No Negro race has suddenly assumed the forms of European civilization. On the contrary, it has preserved its original type throughout its long and dreary course. A similar law has regulated every other development of the human mind.

This law of progress is quite independent of any theory as to whether man was originally produced in a civilized or a savage state. When he has been found in the latter, he has never emerged from it, except by steps of gradual progression, even when external influences have been brought to bear on him. Where these have not existed, the law of his development has been proportionately slower. Man is unable to create within himself, by any sudden operation, a highly advanced state of thought, intellect, or feeling. The whole course of history has

failed to furnish us with a single instance of a nation which has risen suddenly from a low to a high form of civilization.

The rate of progression is not however one of absolute conformity. Some nations have shown a far more rapid power of growth than others. Their ability to assimilate foreign elements admits of considerable degrees of difference. Still this in no way affects the great principle of gradual development. It is merely a modification of it to reach the case of a being endowed with reason.

All the great races of men have been formed so as to develop themselves in relation to a definite moral and intellectual type of thought. A fundamental difference of character has been impressed on them. Their developments take place within that type, and their subsequent history is a gradual evolution of the fundamental principles involved in it. Even where foreign elements have been introduced, they have undergone a change of character in conformity with it. All the great races of men have uniformly preserved their fundamental differences. No truth is more firmly established than this by the concurrent testimony of history.

In the subordinate divisions of the great races of man the same law of gradual development prevails. Every distinct ideal is reached through a succession of stages, the succeeding one having emerged out of that which has preceded it. No nation has ever suddenly emerged from a low into a high state of intellectual cultivation. It is by the acquisition of knowledge gradually heaped together, that all intellectual growth is possible. The creation of a language capable of being used as a fit instrument of thought is one of its pre-conditions. Thought creates language and language reacts on thought. In the same manner all languages have grown in conformity with certain definite laws. Each stage of intellectual advance, when once it has been attained, becomes a platform by means of which a higher is reached. It is impossible to attain a high point of elevation without previously passing through all the intermediate stages.

A similar law of growth prevails in the moral world but shackled by conditions which render its progress slower than in the intellectual. Man's moral nature is far less subject to change than his intellect.

Morality is the aggregate result of our ideas, feelings, reasonings, and relations, acted on by conscience and transmitted from generation to generation by the powerful hand of custom and education. Each preceding generation indelibly imprints its ideas on that which is to follow. Our minds live in and are affected by a moral atmosphere as our bodies are by a material one, and no effort of ours can free us from its influences. In the feelings and habituations in which a man is born, in these, with little variation, he continues. So powerful is the conservative instinct in human nature in relation to morality, that history presents us with no sudden change in the moral aspect of the national life. Whenever changes have taken place they have been brought about by the operation of a succession of previously existing causes, slowly changing the old and developing the new. The principles of right and wrong remain almost fixed, and the changes which they undergo bear no proportion to those which are effected in our intellectual life. The elevation of the moral tone of society is effected in stages far slower than those of its material progress. Man cannot change his habitudes as he does his garments. They form a portion of himself and become inwrought into his being. No well authenticated instance exists of a political community having changed its institutions for a different one, where the foundations of the change had not been laid in a long succession of causes very gradual in their operation. A low standard of moral obligation has never been suddenly elevated to a higher one.

When higher principles of morality have been introduced from an external source, although the general conscience has admitted their abstract rectitude, yet their permanent establishment as principles of action has been extremely gradual. Of this the history of Christianity affords the clearest proof. The abstract rectitude of the Christian principles is recognised, but the practical law of moral obligation which regulates society is one widely different. To those laws men habitually appeal, and not to the Christian standard. Practices continue to prevail which the Christian law utterly repudiates. The process is painfully slow by which Christian principles substitute themselves for the old notions of morality. The moral atmosphere of Christian society is one of a great elevation

above the Pagan one, but that improvement has been effected by a growth of eighteen hundred years. If we wish to count its stages, we must mark them by intervals of centuries.

The religious growth of nations has been subject to the action of the same law. The development of the religious ideas has been more rapid than that of those connected with morality, owing to the more intimate connection of the former with our intellectual powers. We are unable to trace them in their origin, as that of all religions, except two, lies beyond the regions of authentic history. But when they come within its vision we find them subject to similar laws of progress. Their successive stages have been gradually evolved from their original forms. They have been subject to a gradual growth and decay. History presents us with no evidence of a nation which has suddenly changed its religious life for one fundamentally different. Whenever religious changes have been effected, they are due to a long course of previous causation.

The development of all these principles in the individual is no less regulated by the impassable limits assigned by law.

We speak of the creative powers of the mind, but the expression is true in a metaphorical sense only. The mind is unable to create. It can only develop out of materials previously existing. We are united to the past by a bond which no power can break. We designate a change a creation when the development is separated by a considerable interval from the previously existing conditions of thought and feeling. Man's creative power is limited to imparting a somewhat more rapid rate of progress to his developments.

Every development of the mind must take its origin in the state of thought in the midst of which it lives. An atmosphere of thought and feeling surrounds man spiritually, intellectually, and morally. He is compelled to breathe it. Whether he will do so is not left to his own choice. From its influence the mind cannot possibly divest itself. It has no power to create an idealization wholly different from it in type. The spirit of inquiry may question details. Genius may exhibit the old in new relations, but against this general law it as vainly struggles as the

ocean against the shore. It can only act by a process equally gradual.

Within these limits genius is compelled to labour. It can develop the original idealization of the mind, but it cannot elevate itself into another sphere, or open new regions of thought or feeling. Its greatest victories are achieved by propelling those in the midst of which it lives at an accelerated ratio.

The truth of these principles we see displayed in the whole course of ancient science, literature, and art. Each race of men has preserved its great national type. The individual mind has never succeeded in giving birth to a new creation in any of these. Their advances have been by stages. Elevations in the world of mind no less than in that of matter, are the results of successive growths, the former being attained more rapidly than the latter.

Every school of ancient philosophy grew out of that which preceded it. A common basis of thought underlies its physics, its metaphysics, and its moral science. The various developments of Greek thought are most closely related to each other. Such was the case with the mental development which preceded Socrates. His great reformation was no fresh creation, but grew out of the requirements of the Greek mind and the movements of the age. The Sophists had previously discussed every question embraced in the Socratic philosophy, and rendered its advent possible. The great reformer imparted method and aim to previous inquiries. He propounded no new truth. By his discussions the way was gradually prepared for the creation of new systems, which arose in their order, of time, closely related to those from which they sprung, and to each other. One philosopher gradually prepared the way for his successor. The existence of Plato or Aristotle would have been impossible three centuries earlier. Had they been then born, they would have been wholly different from what they were. System was evolved after system, until the activity of thought, having realized its ideal, became exhausted. This led to the adoption of the principle of eclecticism, until the whole culminated in the philosophy of Alexandria.

It should be observed that the interval which separates the original starting point of any of the great systems of thought



from that of its final development is a mere infinitesimal quantity compared with that which lies between the Judaism, out of which Christianity originated, and the character and morality of the Jesus of the Gospels.

No less marked is the development of art. It takes place in a succession of typical forms under the guidance of leading ideas. All that individual genius can effect is to carry out those types to an increased perfection, but never has it succeeded in bursting from one type to another by the mere force of creative power.

Nothing can be more distinct than the great national types of art. The Chinese is separated by the clearest lines from that of India; both from that of Greece; all from those of the modern world. Each has produced the forms impressed on it by its own idealization. Modern art has been modified by the contemplation of that of the ancients; but the foreign elements are as distinctly traceable as the different kinds of stone used in the construction of the same building. The histories of the great arts of architecture, painting and statuary, all bear witness to the same truth.

Nor is the most creative of all geniuses, that of the Poet, an exception to the supremacy of the reign of law. Greek poetry is essentially Greek in character. The Oriental and the Hebrew have worked within well defined limits. Modern poetry bears indubitable marks of the nationalities which have given it birth.

Art has invariably commenced with imperfect forms, and has grown to perfection through a succession of stages. The imperfect sculpture of a savage never suddenly developed itself into the work of a Phidias; the inventor of the first primeval hut never succeeded in creating a Parthenon; still less has the primitive painter of a daub succeeded in producing the works of a Raphael.

Several kinds of poetry have originated in pre-historic times, and we are consequently unable to ascertain the laws which have regulated their production; but those which have had their origin within the period of authentic history, have been subject to similar laws of generation and growth. Even in the earlier ones we can discover distinct traces of the operation of the same principles. They embody the feelings, the ideas, the morality, and



the religion of the times which produced them, and never succeed in rising above their influence.

Equally powerless have been the efforts of man as an individual to create for himself a religion wholly new. Here the conditions are more favourable for the action of the creative power of the mind than in the moral world. But here likewise the powers of the intellect are unable to break off from the conditions of the past. They are limited in their creations by the bounds imposed by the atmosphere of thought and feeling, which has become incorporated with our spiritual and moral being.

Of the origin of the great primitive religions of mankind we are entirely ignorant. But their subsequent developments have taken place within the ken of history. Respecting these we can reason. Two great religions have been born within an historical period, Christianity and Mahometanism. Their progress can be tested by the conditions imposed by history. All views propounded respecting the origin of the others, are theories and not facts.

History does not present us with a single instance of an individual who has created a religion essentially new, or who has succeeded in extensively modifying the old. We pass over the question of the origin of Christianity, as the direct subject of debate. Mahometanism is the work of an individual, but it has been evolved out of systems already existing. It is no new creation. Perhaps some similar claim may be put in for Buddhism.

The latter originated in times on which history throws a very imperfect light. Much doubt exists as to the personal actions of its author, and the facts of its origin. It is certain, however, that it is closely allied to the whole state of previous thought and feeling. It is as much a reform of Braminism as the great work of Luther was of the current Christianity of his day. Neither Luther nor Buddha was the originator of a religion of which the ideas, the conceptions, or the morals were new. They rejected the corruptions of the present by recalling men to the greater purity of its original form. Both Buddhism and Braminism are founded on the same principles of thought. They are alike Pantheistic. They present the same ultimate destiny of man, absorption into the divine nature as his highest good, and seek to realise it by freeing him from the bonds of his

material environment. The one strives to effect this by penance, the other by abstraction.

But Mahometanism arose within a period more decidedly historical, and the Koran is a perpetual witness that the prophet was no creator of thought. We can, without difficulty, ascertain its component parts and their relation to the past. It does not run counter to the existing tendencies of thought and feeling, but fully identifies itself with them. It is exactly fitted to the state of the Arabian mind when it originated, and grew out of its idealization. Of every element not Arabian we can distinctly point out whence it came. Its leading and active truth is the doctrine of the Divine Unity; but this was no discovery of the prophet. All that Mahomet did for it was no more than Luther did for Christianity at the Reformation. Next to this in importance is its fatalism. Its morals are Arabian, it may be with a slight improvement on current notions, but little elevated above them. The old principles of asceticism and sensualism are inwrought into it by a combination not devoid of skill. The author has borrowed from Christianity, but more from its corruptions than from its essence. From Judaism he has plundered largely. He has incorporated with these many of the older beliefs of his countrymen. He has composed his building of stones of various kinds, and we can without difficulty ascertain the different quarries from which each was dug. In a word, it contains no new creation; it unfolds no new aspect of the Creator, nor any fresh principle of morals.

The history of Mahometanism is very important for our purpose, because its origin is not matter of speculation, but an historic fact. We see in it, whether viewed as a whole, or in the parts of which it is composed, the closeness of the relation in which it stood to the state of thought and feeling out of which it originated. It proves that the professed author of a fresh revelation cannot disconnect himself either from the present or the past. All which he is able to effect is to exhibit existing materials in new combinations. He is surrounded by a moral and spiritual environment which binds him fast, and prevents him from being the creator of a new system of thought or feeling. The prophet was an Arab, and his religion was an embodiment of the conceptions of his countrymen, enlarged by the

introduction of such foreign elements as had been for a considerable period working in the national mind.

But the growths which take place in religions are not always developments of an advancing nature. They expand themselves to the full conception of an ideal type, and when this has been effected the work of deterioration speedily begins. The period during which they remain stationary after they have attained the full maturity of their growth is short. Almost all the great religions existing in the world are corruptions of something which was higher, nobler, and purer. As we have said, the formation and growth of the uncorrupted form generally lies beyond the ken of history.

The testimony of history is that these deteriorations are certain and inevitable. There is no religion with which we are acquainted which has not been subject to them. They are also subject to a law of progress. Its corruptions do not take place by sudden leaps, but through successive stages. The rate of corruption is however more rapid than that of growth.

The tendency to deterioration in religion has created the function of the Reformer. His work has been to recall men to the pure conception of the old. He has never been the creator of the new. He has struggled to bring back men to the simple principles of the past. Such was Buddha, such was Luther.

Such reformers have always appealed to acknowledged principles, either written or unwritten, which in the course of time have become obscured. They have brought forth the original truths in which the people professed to believe, the divine authority which they theoretically acknowledged, but which they had practically forsaken. When the movement has been a successful one, the appeal has been always made to old truths. No attempt has been made to effect fresh creations.

The case of Luther presents us with a remarkable proof of the power of those laws from the influence of which the mind is unable to divest itself. He appealed to Scripture and primitive Christianity against centuries of actual practice. The great man's mind had been formed under the influence of the thoughts, feelings, and idealization out of which the system which he attacked had sprung. In the

atmosphere of Scholasticism, not in that of primitive or apostolic Christianity, he lived, thought, and reasoned. His method of theological thought bears most distinctive traces of the School in which his mind had been formed. He was wholly unable to emancipate himself from its influences. Hence his doctrine of consubstantiation. Why was this? He could not altogether free himself from the mental environment of his age.

The different systems of historical Christianity have been the result of gradual growths. They have never been produced at once in their perfection, like Minerva full grown from the head of Jove. They have advanced through a succession of stages of development. They have required long intervals of time for their elaboration. Nicene Christianity took three centuries in completely evolving itself out of Apostolic Christianity. The full conception of the Theocratic Church of the Middle Ages required even a longer period for its development. Christianity in its present forms has taken another three centuries to evolve itself out of that of the Reformation. Yet it will hardly be pretended that as large an interval separates any one of them from the other, as that which lies between the most advanced form of Judaism in existence at the advent, and the full conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists.

If the progress of religious developments has been gradual, that of morality has been still more so. The powers of the imagination aid the former, but produce little influence on the latter. The morality of each succeeding generation is bound to that of the past by the strongest bond of continuity.

History presents us with no great moral reformer who has succeeded in stamping a new morality on his age and nation, and scarcely with one who has recalled it to an older and better type. Nor does she exhibit to us instances of individuals who have elevated themselves to a state of morality far above the atmosphere which they have breathed. She testifies to the fact that all progress in the moral world is effected by a succession of very gradual stages, although the movements in the direction of deterioration have been far more rapid. Even when higher types of morality have been introduced from external sources,

although the general conscience may have recognised their superiority, the previous moral conditions have retained their hold. Of this truth the history of Christianity presents us with many a melancholy example.

Although the moral nature of man is the most conservative portion of his being, still it is subject to a law of progress. It is acted on by the growth of knowledge and the alterations which take place in our social relations. The progress of such changes, however, is of so gradual a character, that they require considerable intervals of time before they can become distinctly appreciable. The necessity of this slow progression follows from the very conditions of our moral being. A few years are often sufficient to enable us to recognise great changes in the intellectual world. To estimate the extent of changes in the moral world, it requires us to take a survey, not of years but of generations. Such intervals are requisite before a custom which was once deemed a virtue can be esteemed a vice.

It follows therefore that the stages by which an individual can progress from a lower to a higher type of moral feeling must be very gradual. To suppose the contrary would be to assume that a man can divest himself of part of his personal being. An enlargement of moral view can be attained only from a source external to himself and the moral atmosphere in which he has been educated.

The history of legislation bears witness to these deep-seated tendencies in human nature. No successful legislator has ever attempted to impose on those for whom he has legislated a body of institutions entirely new. The time when such a thing was thought to be possible has passed away. It is now fully recognised, as the basis of all successful legislation, that institutions must grow, and get incorporated with the character gradually; they cannot be created. The legislator is only successful when he accommodates his institutions to the national character by a gradual process of innovation. All that he can do is to develop existing tendencies by slow stages.

We must now apply these general principles to the mythical creations of the mind, and ascertain the laws which regulate them.



The power of the mind to originate such creations is subject to the same conditions as those by which all our mental powers are regulated. This region might seem to be the most remote from the sphere of law, but even here it asserts its sway no less than in the domains of matter.

All the various principles which we have been considering contribute to the formation of myths, man's intellectual powers, his religious and moral instincts. As all myths have been generated in times anterior to the existence of history, it is impossible to trace them through the actual stages of their formation, but they afford abundant proof that their production has been in strict subjection to law.

All history has been preceded by a mythic period. Of this the accounts are either fabulous, or they contain truth and fiction mingled together in inextricable confusion.

A myth is not a deliberately invented untruth, like an historical forgery. It is the creation of the imagination during a credulous age, which after a while has been believed in as a fact. The inventors of ordinary myths had no intention to deceive. The belief in them as facts has been the result of the credulity of the times.

But between ordinary myths and those which are said to compose our Gospels there is a remarkable difference. The composer of a common myth did not mistake it for a fact which had actually occurred. But, according to the theory of our opponents, the authors of the Evangelical myths must have been possessed of more unbounded credulity. They invented a number of stories respecting Jesus of Nazareth in conformity with their conceptions of the character of the Messiah, and then persuaded themselves that these mythical creations were the actual facts of his life.

Still, however, myths of every character are developed in conformity with law. This is a necessary consequence of their being embodiments of the intellectual, moral, and religious ideas of the times which have given them birth.

If a myth is a creation of the imagination, which in course of time has been mistaken for a reality, two conditions are requisite for its production: first, an interval of time sufficient for the growth of those moral and religious conceptions of which the mythic story is the embodiment; and secondly, another interval sufficient to



allow that which was originally believed to be mythic to be confounded with the actual.

But the mythic theory not only postulates the production of a body of myths such as we have described, but it requires that they should have been evolved in sets, each rising above that which preceded it, to a higher elevation of moral and religious sentiment. For these operations therefore a proportionate interval of time becomes absolutely necessary.

As myths are invested with the attributes of the marvellous, they have always originated in times when the truth was unknown that all phenomena are regulated by invariable laws. At such periods every operation of nature is viewed as the result of the action of an independent power. The very notion of law is unknown.

In times when the light of contemporaneous history shines clearly, their generation becomes impossible. The mythic faculty perishes in exact proportion as the spirit of historical inquiry is created.

All myths must take for their starting point the general idealization of the people among whom they arise. They must be the embodiment of their feelings, their passions, and their tendencies. They represent the general ideas about nature, man, religion and morals, as they are reflected in the inventor's mind, and in the society in which he moves.

The original creator of a myth is therefore limited in his powers of invention by the religious and moral atmosphere in which he breathes. He can only advance beyond it in strict conformity with the laws of man's mental development.

The general laws which regulate the production of the modern novel are a fair exemplification of those which must have determined that of the myth. The novel writer is compelled to work in conformity with the idealization of his time. He takes for granted its ideas of religion and morality. Out of this atmosphere of thought and feeling he creates his characters. Creations widely different from these, even if possible ones, would not be acceptable to those for whom he writes.

Yet he works at an advantage compared with the mythologist. The novelist lives and works in an age of

inquiry and intellectual movement. He labours with a conscious purpose; the mythologist produces his myths spontaneously. He is therefore more fettered by the intellectual and moral conditions of his time.

As myths are the productions of an unreflecting age they cannot embody recondite views of either man, religion, or morality. They are the result of the unrestrained play of an imagination which personifies everything. The creation of myths is not the result of the exercise of the powers of reflection. A philosopher cannot successfully fabricate one. It is necessary that they should embody the general idealization of which the author is only an unconscious unit.

A myth which failed to embody the general idealization, would never obtain currency or belief. It would perish with its author. Such a myth, however good in itself, would be as certain of rejection as an unknown coin.

The incorporation into myths of ideas in advance of the general conceptions of the time can only be effected when they are introduced in very small proportions. Before a fresh advance can be made it is necessary that these should become incorporated into the general idealization. When this has been effected a fresh development becomes a possibility.

It is evident, therefore, that improvements can only be effected in the religious and moral aspect of myths by very gradual stages. The whole of society must be leavened with them before a fresh improvement in their character becomes possible.

When considerable numbers of men are engaged in mythical creations, the preservation of identity of type must become a matter of the greatest difficulty. What then are the conditions under which it is possible?

When a number of artists are engaged in mythical creations, it is inevitable that the results should vary in conformity with the individual peculiarities of their authors. But under certain circumstances it is possible to preserve a common type of conception in the midst of a diversity which is the necessary result of the action of individual minds. This can only be effected as long as they closely adhere to the idealization by which they are surrounded. The immutability of the original type of

thought is the necessary condition of preserving this identity of conception. The moment they vary from it their creations must produce as great a divergency of type as the number of minds engaged in their elaboration.

The more widely the belief in a mythic story is spread, the more rapid will be its subsequent developments. But exactly in proportion to the powers of the artists to raise themselves above the conceptions of the times, or to introduce improved ideas in religion or morality, must be the degree in which their respective creations will present a divergency from the original type. This tendency must have become more and more inevitable when those engaged in such developments were animated by party spirit, or were widely separated from each other in opinion.

In proportion, therefore, as we admit the possibility of a more rapid mythical development, we increase the certainty of a divergency of the original typical conception. If persons widely separated by place, mental endowment, or nationality, as must have been the case in the primitive Church, were to set themselves to develop a conception through a succession of mythical creations, unless there were influences at work to keep them close to the forms of the original idea, a divergency must be introduced into the creations exactly in proportion to the varied tendencies which animated the artists.

Let us illustrate our meaning by an example. We will assume that the Gospels are mythical developments, and that the original starting point of the myths was a purely human Jesus, dramatised in conformity with the ideas then current as to the conception of the Messiah.

If the mythologists, while they clothed their Jesus in a mythical drapery, intended to preserve a common type of character, while they were working in different places, and under different conditions, it is evident that they could only have preserved an identity of character by confining themselves rigidly to the conditions of the original conception. The moment they began to improve on it, or to incorporate new views into it, artists labouring under such conditions must have created, not a character representing a unity, but a variety of portraitures, as widely divergent from each other as were the different conceptions at work in the minds of the mythologists. This diver-

gency must have increased at every successive stage of the elaboration.

The general form of the ancient mythical developments has been evolved in strict conformity with these laws. Their theology and morality are embodiments of the conceptions of the time. Their men are embodiments of the heroic conception. They are all formed on the same general type of character, developed according to the fancy of the mythologists. Their Gods are their heroes on a larger scale, intensified in their virtues and their vices, or else they are personifications of the simple powers of nature. If the poet introduced into them improved conceptions of morality or religion, it is evident either that his ideas must have possessed but a very slight elevation above those current in his time, or that he must have thought it necessary to progress from the lower to the higher by very gradual stages of advancement. He has not invested his Gods with a higher morality than he has his men. The inhabitants of his Pantheon are animated by many of the meanest or the most odious passions of humanity. For one another they have neither esteem nor love. The passions of the times are reflected alike in every action of God or man. The whole is a portraiture of the manners of the age, not tending towards progressive improvement, but magnified on a scale of vastness. If improvements in morality and religion could be attained by the creation of myths, such as we find in the times antecedent to history, the whole style and character of ancient mythology affords us the most indubitable evidence that the progress of improvement must have been pre-eminently slow. In the state of society, such as that represented by the myths, moral and religious progression must be the work not of generations but of ages. We shall have occasion to examine this subject more fully hereafter.

We are unable to determine on historical evidence the amount of progression of thought which took place within the mythic period, but as soon as we arrive beyond it we can ascertain on sufficiently trustworthy data both the degree and the law of growth. The Greek character, as it is presented to us by the first dawns of history, is one very closely allied to its mythic type, both in its religious and moral aspects. A development has been brought

about such as the altered conditions of society rendered inevitable, but the state of moral and religious enlightenment which separates the one from the other is unimportant. Throughout the whole of the historical ages its developments in both these respects are very gradual ones. The morality of the historical Greek is unquestionably an improvement on that of the Homeric hero, still more on that of the Homeric God, but it continues the same in kind, humanized by the gradual improvements in civilization. Yet this improvement it had required ages to effect. The popular religion was still the old mythical one. We must await the birth of the spirit of sceptical inquiry and of philosophic thought before either of them move at an accelerated ratio. Of all states of the human mind the mythical is the most unsuited for producing improvements in either religion or morality.

But according to the views of our opponents the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists was elaborated out of primeval Judaism by a succession of mythical creations. Christianity is a simple development out of Judaism, effected in conformity with the laws which regulate the operations of the human mind. Is this possible? To enable us to answer this question, we must investigate the nature of that state of thought and feeling out of which this conception must have originated, and endeavour to ascertain the extent of the interval which lies between it and the portraiture of the Jesus of the Gospels. When we have ascertained this, we shall be able to form a definite conclusion whether it is possible that the one can have been evolved from the other in conformity with the known laws of human development, in the manner and during the time which the supporters of the mythic theory postulate for its production.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PREPARATION MADE IN THE GENTILE WORLD FOR THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE impugnors and the advocates of the historical character of the Gospels are mutually agreed that Christi-



anity was ushered into the world after a long course of events suited to prepare the way for its reception. Mankind had undergone a long course of education for it. It appeared at a period when successions of independent causes, operating through the entire course of preceding history, had converged in the production of a state of things suited to facilitate its progress. The age in which it appeared was fitted to Christianity, and Christianity to the age. The sacred writers themselves assert the same truth when they declare that Christ appeared "in the fulness of time."

While both parties agree as to the fact of such preparation, they differ as to the relation in which previous thought stood to Christianity, and wholly in the point of view from which they contemplate it.

The former maintain that this preparation consisted in the gradual unfolding of events in their natural order by a long course of developmients of which Christianity was the natural culmination. The latter consider that these developmients, although they sprang out of each other by a succession of causes, were the manifestations of purpose, will, and contrivance, by which a superintending Providence accommodated the whole course of preceding events to Christianity. According to the one view, Christianity was the simple culmination of a long succession of natural causes spontaneously evolving themselves; the climax, in fact, to which they all tended as the result of inevitable law wrought out by a natural course of evolution. According to the other, Christianity and the whole course of history were correlated to each other by the power of a designing mind.

A precisely similar difference of opinion exists as to the correlations observable in the natural world. Respecting the fact that things are thus correlated there is no disagreement. The air which we breathe is correlated to animal and vegetable life, to light and sound. Man is correlated to coal. The number of such correlations in nature is all but infinite. One class of philosophers discern in them manifestations of purpose, will, and a designing mind, effecting its decrees through the agency of law. The other reject this inference.

Exactly similar is the controversy which exists between



the opponents and those who maintain the supernatural origin of Christianity. They admit the fact of the correlation between it and the historical developments of man. They differ as to its cause.

There is also another source of disagreement. The opponent of the historical character of the Gospels maintains, that a very inconsiderable interval separated the last development of man from the primitive form of Christianity. The believer, on the contrary, asserts that this interval is so broad, that it could not have been bridged over by the unassisted powers of man, and that a divine interposition was necessary to accomplish it. The one considers that man has developed himself in a long chain, of which Christianity is one of the links. The other denies this whole theory.

But as all are agreed that a course of preparation preceded the introduction of Christianity, it will be necessary briefly to describe its nature.

Both parties will agree that the whole course of previous history was the drama in which its different scenes were laid. It was twofold.

First, in the Gentile world.

Secondly, in the Jewish Church.

The most prominent fact in the world's history at the appearance of Christianity was the full establishment of the Roman Empire. The whole course of history had now converged in its erection. This empire formed the most remarkable preparation for Christianity in the Gentile world.

The believer in the supernatural origin of Christianity asserts that the growth of the Roman empire was the direct result of a Providence superintending the affairs of men. All the preceding events of history had contributed to it. If many of them had happened otherwise, its erection would have been impossible. Its growth was gradual. It was the result of centuries of wondrous effort, and indomitable perseverance. A city slowly spread its influence over Italy, and Italy conquered the civilized world. Each opponent attacked her, not in the hour of its own strength, or of Rome's weakness, but when these conditions were reversed, and fell before her. If they had appeared at an earlier stage of her history, they would have overmatched her; if they had united in attacking her, she must have fallen beneath their blows. In surveying her history through

its length and breadth the conclusion forced on the mind is that Providence had decreed to her the empire of the world.

About these facts there is no dispute between the believer in, and the denier of the supernatural origin of the Gospels.

How then did the empire prepare the way for Christianity?

First, its establishment crushed out the old nationalities. A universal empire produced a need for a universal religion.

The destruction of the old nationalities was an almost necessary condition for the establishment of Christianity. They were animated by an intense feeling of hostility to each other. Difference of race implied hatred and mutual estrangement. Even small states of the same race, such as those of Greece, lived in a condition of chronic warfare. Different nations were separated from each other by deep feelings of alienation. They felt few common bonds of interest. But the might of Rome crushed these nationalities and gradually modified them by subjecting them to a common dominion. She forced on them mutual peace. Under her dominion they acquired a feeling of mutual interest. The old acerbities wore out. It produced in them the consciousness of a common humanity.

Had Christianity appeared at any previous period of the world's history, she would have encountered the fiercest spirit of mutual alienation; had she arisen two or three centuries earlier, she would have found that people which was now enforcing universal peace with the strong hand of power, in the full career of its conquests; if her advent had been antedated less than a single century, she would not only not have found the nationalities unextinguished, but Rome and Italy drenched in civil blood. She presented herself at the very acmé of time. The Fabii, the Claudii, the Scipios, Sylla and Marius, Pompeius and Cæsar, Brutus, Cassius, Antonius and Octavius had prepared the way of the Lord.

The old religions were intensely national and local. No less so was the older religion of the Roman State. From their nature they were incapable of becoming the religion of mankind. The empire, which united in one body politic all the races of civilized man and no inconsiderable number of those designated barbarians, discovered the existence of a want. She proclaimed the need of a religion suited not to a nation, but to man. When she uttered this

proclamation, Christianity arose, and offered for universal acceptance, not a religion fitted for race only, but one suited for man.

Secondly, in crushing the nationalities, the empire destroyed the vitality of the national religions, and with it the belief in their truth. The course of free inquiry had shaken them. The empire crushed them.

This result was not designed by her policy, but it followed from it as a consequence.

The old religions were the religions of nations and of races. They were all essentially poetical. Acceptable service could only be rendered to the Deity in a particular locality, nor was he pleased with the worship of men of alien race. The expansion or the retrogression of national life was alike fatal to them. They could make no proselytes. Among men of uncongenial race they languished.

The original Roman religion was of a precisely similar description. While devoted to his own religion, policy forced the Roman to be liberal to that of others. As the empire widened, he offered the Gods of the conquered nations a domicile in his city. But the transplanted Gods could not transplant the faith of their original worshippers. They languished in their new abode. Every fresh addition to the Pantheon destroyed a portion of the faith in the divinity of its original occupants, without acquiring any for the new comer. Rome was conscious that her own religion was inadequate to the wants of her extensive empire. She sought to supply the want by incorporating the different national worships with her own. The different Gods speedily subverted the belief of each other's Divinity.

This result had been greatly facilitated by the progress of philosophic thought. The poetic religions had been the creations of the imagination. They were utterly unable to stand the test of reason. Investigation of any kind generated a spirit of scepticism. For a considerable period unbelief in the popular religions had been the secret creed of educated society. It gradually permeated one class after another, until the old popular fables had become a subject of derision. The age in which Christianity appeared was one of intense scepticism. All religious beliefs had fallen into decay.

The times therefore were exactly suited for the advent of a religion such as Christianity. The decay of the old religions had occasioned a deep void in the human mind. She came forth as a religion suited to fill up that void. They perished through their irrationality. She presented to man a rational religion. They were the idealizations of races only. She appeared as the religion of man.

If Christianity had appeared at an early period of history, she would have encountered the old religions in their origin. The existence of active faith in them would have impeded her progress. If a few centuries later they would have arrayed against her some remnants of their strength. Her appearance at the particular period of the world's history, when she unquestionably originated, enabled her to assault them in the hour of their utmost decrepitude. As respects man's religious wants she was manifested at the very fullness of time.

The third important point of preparation which the Roman empire made for Christianity consisted in the universal diffusion of civilization which took place under its shade. By it both the work and the progress of the Missionary was greatly facilitated.

II. Another great development of the Gentile world, as a preparation for Christianity, was the great movement of the Greek mind in the direction of philosophic thought, an influence which had burst its original limits and extended itself over the Roman world.

It bore a negative and a positive aspect; a negative one in what it uprooted; a positive one in what it created. As an influence the former was more powerful than the latter.

The spirit of philosophical speculation had pushed itself into every department of human thought. Nothing divine or human had obtained exemption from its investigations. It had discussed, with the spirit of the freest inquiry, alike religion, morality, the mind of man, the universe, the principles of political society, and had striven to penetrate the regions of ontology. Human science had been created.

But the philosopher had failed in creating a religion. His reasonings destroyed all faith in those believed in by the vulgar; and when he attempted to unfold the Divine nature, he felt himself embarked on the ocean of intermin-

able doubt. He presented to the mind abstractions, or pantheistic conceptions, but no personal God. If a God at all, his Deity was the God of the intellect, not of the heart. He was order, or fate, or the active power in nature; but he was void of the affections of holiness or love. In him there was nothing corresponding to the affections of the human heart. He was no gracious God of Providence with whom the soul could hold communion, nor was he accessible to prayer. Man requires a God who is intellect, but much more one who has heart. But a God with affections, philosophy not only failed to supply, but pronounced to be an impossibility.

The speculations of the philosophers proved the inability of the human intellect to create a religion suitable to the wants of man. They created a spiritual famine, and tried to appease it by presenting men with husks. But the mind was unsatisfied. It longed to know its relations to the spiritual world. Philosophy filled it with uncertainty, without satisfying one single craving. Never in the history of man was there a period when a Divine interposition was more necessary, if such interposition was possible. Scepticism was rife; the old was passing away; the longings of the human spirit were producing religions of wild extravagance. At this crisis Christianity arose, and presented itself as a rational solution of the aspirations of the mind.

Philosophy had succeeded better in investigating the principles of moral obligation. She had determined their great outlines. But the Platonic dialogues show that the result was not entirely satisfactory. She was unable to reduce them to principles of pure reason. But here again she disclosed the existence of a void which she was wholly unable to fill. While she discovered the main outlines of the moral law, she laid completely bare the weakness of moral motive. She was unable to supply one of sufficient power to make the moral law a practical reality. She pointed out what was right, but how to make the right actual, she was unable to discover. This inability she openly declared. Whatever she might help to accomplish for select minds, she declared herself unable to find a motive which could impart vitality to the masses.\*

\* The Ethics of Aristotle is unquestionably the most important work



In her attempts to discover a motive of power sufficient to make the moral law a reality in man, her failure was no less signal than in inventing a religion. Man not only wanted to know what he ought to do, but to be supplied with a power to enable him to do it. At the time when this want was become completely manifest, and man's inability to supply it proved, Christianity appeared, announcing her ability to supply it, and actually breathed a new vitality into the human bosom.

These investigations into morality afforded not only a negative but a positive preparation. They created a system of ideas suited for the embodiment of Christian conceptions. They also aided to propagate ideas on morality which they and Christianity held in common. They prepared the field in which Christianity sowed the seed.

Nor was the philosopher successful in creating the idea of a perfect man or of a perfect state. In speculating on these subjects, he forgot to lay his foundation in the unalterable laws of our moral being. He strove to teach nature how to effect this work better, instead of placing himself in the position of her disciple. His perfect man is therefore always marked with some manifest imperfection. Whether he attempted to depict such a character or the image of a perfect state, the philosopher always ended by rooting out some of the holiest and best

on man's moral nature which was produced by the ancient world. The philosopher has handled the whole question with a masterly analysis. If we wish to get a correct idea of the despair with which philosophy contemplated the improvement of the masses of mankind, it is necessary to read the whole of the conclusion of this remarkable work. After the fullest discussion of man and the motives on which virtuous conduct rested, what good did he hope to accomplish by his labours? He tells us plainly that his expectations were of a most limited character. He hoped to do something with a few choice spirits, but he says positively that he was wholly unable to reach the masses of mankind. "Reasonings," says he, "are unable to impel the many to what is good and noble; for they are not naturally disposed to yield obedience to shame but to fear; nor to abstain from bad things on account of their being disgraceful, but on account of punishment; for living by passion, they pursue their peculiar pleasures, and avoid the opposite pains; but of what is morally beautiful and truly pleasant, they have not even a conception, being devoid of all taste for it."—(Nicomachean Ethics, Book X.)



affections which nature had implanted in the human bosom.

Nor where the philosopher failed had the poet been more successful.

The poet was compelled to work in the ideal atmosphere by which he was surrounded. This limited him to a certain type in his creations, above which he was unable to elevate himself. His Deities he could only develop on the principles of the original myths. His heroes are formed on the same model. He clothed them with the idealized feelings of those in the midst of whom he lived. He did not attempt to create more and more perfect types. He therefore never rises higher than existing notions of religious and moral obligation. The hero is invested with the virtues and vices of the age in which he lived. The God exhibits the same on a gigantic scale. The Greek poet has never attempted to depict a perfect man.

Another of the important preparations for the advent of Christianity was the philosophic discussions on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The possibility of the existence of the soul after death had been recognised from very early times. Nothing however could be more gloomy than the old poetic conceptions of the Greek under-world, the habitation of departed spirits. Their immortality was dreary, cheerless, powerless, shadowy, unsubstantial. The belief in it was not the result of the convictions of reason, but was founded on instincts in human nature, which connect man with the spiritual world. Even if it was not entirely devoid of a moral influence, it was a small and frequently a perverted one.

These notions perished when the touchstone of rational investigation was applied to them.

The nature of man's future destiny formed one of the earliest subjects of philosophical speculation. The philosopher was unable to establish the belief in man's immortality on evidence before which reason felt it necessary to bow. Still a belief in it in some form was a tenet of the larger number of philosophic sects. Yet entire schools denied its possibility. But although he was unable to establish it on pure principles of reason, the constant discussions which it underwent in the philosophic schools tended to give the doctrine a general currency. In their

hands it passed through a purifying process. The old beliefs in Tartarus and Elysium perished, and an idea of immortality was created more worthy of human aspiration. Amidst the uncertainties in which it was shrouded, it had awakened a general anxiety for deeper certainty respecting man's condition after death, and a wide-spread desire for immortality.

But the philosopher was unable to invest his doctrine with a moral aspect. Ignorant of the Divine government of the Universe, he was unable to enforce it as a state in which men would be rewarded or punished according to their deeds. He could not bring the doctrine to bear on the conscience, or make it subservient to the production of an increased feeling of responsibility. His God was not the moral Governor of the Universe, and therefore cared nothing about what was done by man. He created aspirations which he could not satisfy. Christianity came forward and offered herself as their solution. The philosopher acted as an effectual pioneer to the heralds of immortality.

Still the teaching of the philosophers on the moral order of the Universe was as a preparation for Christianity purely negative. Its secrets they were unable to unfold. They took no bright view of its future destinies. They were unable to conceive of the order of Providence as an arrangement of a wise and loving Father. They therefore for the most part took refuge in a doctrine of fate, or banished the Creator of the Universe into a pleroma freed from the cares of its government, which they committed into the hands of subordinate agents, or left it utterly uncared for.

It is very important to observe the aspect of sadness which all ancient speculation on the future prospects of man presents. The indefinite future perfectibility of man was no dogma of the philosophic schools. Modern speculators consider all the developments of man as so many stages of advance leading to a more glorious future. Ancient speculators took the reverse course. With them man's glories were in the past; his future prospects sombre. A gloomy view of man's future was impressed on nearly all the speculators of the ancient world. They felt society crumbling around them, without any prospect of its regeneration by imparting to it fresh principles of

vitality. No ancient speculator dreamed that a millennium of perfection was awaiting the human race.

But the darkness of night is the preparation for the dawn of day. The darkness of human hopes had attained its acmé. Religion, morality, and old political institutions were dissolving before the eyes of men. At this very period Christianity arose proclaiming a brighter future to mankind.

Oriental speculations had been travelling Westward, and prior to the period when Christianity appeared, they had made some impression on Greek and Roman thought. They introduced to Western thought the idea of the possibility of an Incarnation.

This idea was familiar to the Oriental religions, and formed a portion of their Pantheism. But in its progress Westward, it had undergone a variety of transformations. It presented itself in the form of a number of intelligences, intermediate between the supreme God and the material world, of which they were the originators and authors, and between whom and it they were the connecting links.

It is impossible to ascertain the precise influence which these views had exerted prior to the advent of Christianity. Their progress Westward seems to have been nearly contemporaneous with it, or only slightly to have preceded it. After its appearance they presented themselves in every variety of form. They obtained a home at Alexandria, and spread among the Western Oriental races.

Between Christianity and these views there is a wide divergence. The Oriental doctrine of an incarnation, in whatever form it developed itself, was purely physical and pantheistic. That of Christianity is wholly moral and personal. Still it would be naturally suited to facilitate the progress of the nobler doctrine by rendering the conception less startling. But there is not only a total absence of proof that it had penetrated the mind of Judea at the time when Christianity arose, but we have the strongest evidence that such conceptions were alien to the whole range of Jewish thought.

We are ready, however, to concede that the existence of the idea of an incarnation had thus become a possibility. But it is one thing merely to conceive of it as possible; it is another to invest such a creation of the imagination with the attributes of a Christ.

III. The third great preparation for Christianity made in the Gentile world consisted in the wide diffusion of the Greek language, and in the creation of that peculiar form of it in which the Christian Scriptures have been recorded.

The formation of a language capable of embodying a revelation is a necessary condition of its existence. Unless each individual man has a supernatural illumination directly imparted to his mind, the only medium through which a revelation can be imparted to him is the instrumentality of a sufficiently developed language.

All advanced stages of thought are only possible when a language exists suitable for their embodiment. Thought and language are mutually correlated to one another. Thought first creates language, and language exerts a reflex action on thought. Language is the mind's instrument in thinking. It embodies all man's experiences of the past. A high order of thought cannot be expressed in a language of inferior type. It would have been impossible for Plato or Aristotle either to have thought or written in the language of the Red Indian or the Caffre.

The Greek tongue was one of the finest instruments of thought which has ever been produced by man. It was the result of, and embodied in itself a record of all the previous activities of the Greek mind. To its formation they had all contributed. It was capable of expressing every form of thought. As such it was exactly suited to become the language of a divine revelation.

This language had passed through several successive stages of growth. Its last development expressly fitted it to become the language of Christianity. This consisted in the creation of that peculiar form of it called Hellenistic Greek.

In this dialect Oriental and Greek modes of thinking had effected a union. During the course of its creation it had embodied in the Greek tongue the tone of thought which had hitherto been the exclusive inheritance of the Jewish people. This embodiment was a necessary condition for the Greek language becoming a suitable vehicle for the reception and communication of Christianity. It baptized the language of the poet, the historian, the orator, and the philosopher, with the ideas of the psalmist and the prophet.

Its creation was due to no fortuitous accident, but to a

long chain of historical causes. Had any one of them been otherwise this instrument of thought would never have existed.

Of these causes the conquests of Alexander were the most important. The next in importance was the reign of the Ptolemies in Egypt. Various other events also contributed their share. Through means of these a considerable portion of the Jewish people became Grecized.

All the various political events which led to the formation of the empire of Alexander, and which grew out of it, were thus a precondition of Christianity, and a preparation for it. Alexander, without intending it, was a pioneer of Christ. All the preceding political events of the Greek world were the pioneers of Alexander.

As respects the Greek language, Christianity appeared at the very fulness of time. If she had arisen a century or two earlier, the Greek tongue would have been unable to embody her theology.

If Christianity had been forced to express herself in Classical Latin, humanly speaking she would have proved a failure. Her doctrines would have been unable to find expression in this language. It was only after the gradual spread of Christianity among the Romanized nations that Latin became slowly capable of expressing the ideas of theology. The great portion of the early Christian writers wrote in Greek.

Still more unfit for its reception would have been the earlier Latin, or any of the barbarous and merely local tongues.

Had Christianity spoken in the Hebrew language, she would never have succeeded in penetrating the Western world, the destined scenes of her most glorious triumphs.

A peculiarity of the Hellenistic dialect is the facility with which it admits of nearly literal translation. This rendered it particularly suitable for becoming the instrument through which Christianity was to be communicated. The importance of this will be best estimated, if we consider the obstacles with which the translation of its Scriptures would have been attended if they had been written in the language of Thucydides or of Plato.

But the wide diffusion of the Greek language throughout the Oriental and Occidental world, was another special



adaptation of the Greek tongue to Christianity. At no other period of history were civilized men so generally capable of expressing themselves through the medium of a single tongue. This was one of the causes of her rapid progress.

Alexander's conquests had spread it in the East. The establishment of the Roman empire, which had incorporated Greek civilization with itself, had propagated it in the West. The exact period when Christianity appeared was the time of its widest diffusion.

This wide diffusion was the result of all the causes which had been acting on the events of previous history.

If Christianity had appeared at an earlier period, instead of finding a universal language prepared for her utterances, she must have addressed mankind through a multitude of dialects, in many of which writing was unknown. The detriment which she would have sustained from this cause alone is best estimated by a reference to the obstacles which the existence of a variety of unformed tongues places in the way of the modern missionary.

Thus the events of history in the Gentile world have been correlated to Christianity through an infinite variety and nicety of adjustment. The laws which regulate the developments of political society and the mind of man have, by their several and united action, prepared the way of the Lord. The impugner of the historical character of the Gospels considers that the laws of natural development are sufficient to account for this. His opponent is of opinion that such correlations are proofs of the presence of mind, will, purpose, design, and of a superintending Providence. Respecting the actual facts both parties must agree that such a correlation actually existed. This is not a matter of theory but of fact. Christianity came into the world at a time exactly suited for its propagation, and precisely at a period when it was most wanted. The whole course of previous history had prepared the way for it. Had a few links in the chain been wanting, Christianity might have perished at the hour of her birth. We shall not discuss the cause of these remarkable correlations. The fact that they exist is sufficient for our argument.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THE PREPARATIONS MADE BY PROVIDENCE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENTS OF JUDAISM.

THE workings of Providence in the Gentile world furnished Christianity with the instrumentality by means of which it was successfully propagated. They had little to do with its direct elaboration. The course of events and the progress of thought had created a state of things which was the pre-condition of its existence. But neither of them was the author of the Christian ideas. The preparation for their development must be sought in the history of the Jewish race.

If Christianity be a divine revelation, it must be conceded as an historical fact that it emerged out of Judaism. It is consequently of the utmost importance that we should have a clear comprehension of the relation of the one to the other. But if the mythic theory be true, Christianity is a natural growth out of Judaism, according to the laws of development of the human mind. It must therefore not only have been a preparation for Christianity, but its parent. We cannot determine the possibility of this without first ascertaining the nature of that state of Jewish thought and feeling out of which Christianity originated, and carefully determining the interval which separates the one from the other.

For this purpose we will first take a brief view of the religion and morality of the Old Testament, and the progress of their gradual development. We shall then examine the nature of its Messianic predictions, and investigate the development of the Messianic idea between the cessation of the prophetic period and the advent, and determine the elements which it supplied for the creation of the conception of a Christ. It will then be necessary to ascertain the precise state of thought and feeling out of which, if it be a mythical creation, the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists must have originated. This will place us in a position to address ourselves directly to our argument.

The Old Testament contains two developments of

Judaism in its moral and religious aspect, that of the Law, and that of the Psalmists and the Prophets. The latter of these represents Judaism in its highest culmination. To these followed a third period of partial development, but of still more serious declension. This embraces the interval which lies between the termination of the prophetic period and the advent.

The religious and moral aspects of the first stage of Judaism present us with a religion and morality only suited to an infantine state of the human mind. In one point it advanced above the religions by which it was surrounded, in its doctrine of the Unity of God. But its worship was unspiritual; its morality was that of a barbarous age; its political institutions were only suited for a nation in a low state of civilization.

As a religion it was an accommodation to the existing state of the human mind. The truth of the Divine Unity was one too sublime to be accepted by the national mind in its fulness. Its clear light was darkened by being enshrouded in a cloud of localism, ritualism, and symbolism.

The greatest peculiarity of Jewish theology is, that while it contains the conception of God as the great Creator of the Universe, it narrows the conception of him into that of the National God of the Jewish people.

The reason of this was the state of the human mind in which the religion originated. Men could form no conception of the Deity except as a national God. He could only receive acceptable service in peculiar places and from particular races. The conception of man's brotherhood did not exist. Consequently it was impossible to conceive of God as the great Father of the human family.

The doctrine of the existence of one Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, was the great antagonistic element to the religions by which it was surrounded. While these from their partial character were devoid of all power of improvement, this great principle made Judaism capable of developing itself into higher and better forms. In proportion as the idea became expanded, and impressed on the national theology, it was certain to throw off the lower elements by which it was encrusted. The notion of the locality of Deity could not co-exist beside that of the universal God.

The low state of mind to which the original form of Judaism was addressed is shown by the ritualistic and symbolical character of its worship.

To the ordinary worshipper the Jewish service was one addressed exclusively to his senses. It was a worship performed not by him but for him. The Priest was the only person who had access to Deity. The acceptable place of worship was not a man's own home, from whence might ascend the service of the heart and life, but a distant temple where the priests were performing a daily round of sacrifices and rites. Here the Jew was taught to believe that Jehovah had his special habitation, and that He contemplated it with peculiar delight. Every act of worship had to be offered in a prescribed form to make it acceptable. The ritual was pre-eminently elaborate. The worshipper, when his conscience was oppressed with sin, was taught to slaughter an animal and present its blood on the altar as an atonement. Outward impurities made a man unclean. Outward ordinances were the media of cleansing. Only a few rays of light could penetrate to the worshipper through a crowd of dark symbols and unmeaning rites.

Such a religion was suited to a state of mind to which spiritual worship was unknown. It inspired the sentiment of awe with respect to the Deity, and darkly pointed him out as the punisher of sin. As such it feebly announced the doctrine of man's responsibility.

Nothing tends to give us a deeper impression of the low state of religion for which primitive Judaism was adapted, than the entire absence of any provision in the Mosaic institutes for a system of religious teaching. Its priests were sacrificers and warriors, but not scribes. If they acted in the latter capacity, it was only to explain points of ritual. Bodily, not mental capacity was the qualification for their office. At the period of the greatest mental maturity, they ceased from active functions; and only entered on them in the maturity of bodily strength. If the Mosaic symbolism was intended as a means of propagating religious truth, nothing was more requisite than a body of preachers, whose duty it should have been to teach its secret meaning. But of such an institution we find no trace. Whatever symbolical meaning it was intended to convey was left wholly to the worshipper to learn for himself. It must

have been therefore small; for the power to see deeper meanings in the elaborate ceremonial must have been far beyond the ken of an ordinary Jew. In the absence of an authorized system of instruction, if the interpretation of an elaborate symbolism is intrusted to the individual mind, it must soon produce an endless system of extravagance.

The small degree in which the earlier Jew was penetrated by the more spiritual aspect of his religion is shown by his habitual tendency to fall off into the idolatry of the surrounding nations. This proves that his views could have been little elevated above them. Had a wide interval separated their religious ideas, such apostacies would have been impossible. Enlightened theists cannot at once fall into degraded forms of idolatry. It is impossible to entertain worthy views of the great Creator of the Universe and a few months after to be prostrate before a Baal or an Ashtaroth. The constant apostacies of the Jews are only explicable on the principle that their religious views must have borne a striking affinity to those of the surrounding nations. The connecting link was the localism of their conception of the Deity, their absence of spirituality of mind, and the ritualism and symbolism of their worship.

The moral conceptions of the Jew bore a close analogy to his religion. As his religion consisted of outward service, his morality was law, exhibited in the form of positive precept. When he had obeyed this, he had fulfilled all moral obligation. His Ten Commandments were so many literal precepts. He had no Sermon on the Mount to unfold the eternal principles of right on which they rested.

But the history shows us that the morality of the law, such as it was, was very imperfectly realized in either the conceptions or the practices of the people. The portraits of the hero and the saint, such as we meet with them in the book of Judges, are evidently the embodiments of the popular conception of holiness.

None of the eminent Jewish worthies ever withheld himself from a deed of blood. This characteristic is stamped on the Jewish hero throughout the whole course of his history. The slaughter of a multitude of opponents produces in him no sentiment of horror. We do not say

this for the purpose of depreciating his character; it was great for the age in which he lived. But such was the moral feeling of his race. He saw nothing wrong in taking unsparing vengeance on his enemies, and destroying them without discrimination in the mass.

The ideal of the heroic and moral character of the early Jew may be considered as exhibited in such men as Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. They were the great men of their race and nation. We must not expect to find inferior men practising a higher order of morality. In fact the book of Judges supplies us with unequivocal evidence, that among the masses the moral standard was a low one. Morality cannot attain a sudden elevation above the principles and conditions of the times. The Jewish worthies must not be judged by the standard of Christianity, or even of a higher civilization than their own.

Amidst many of the harsher aspects of morality, the natural products of a barbarous age, the Mosaic code presents us with many instances of legislation of a milder character. A remarkable instance of this was the institution of the cities of refuge. The spirit of private revenge was deeply seated in the minds of the Jewish race. Its morality deemed it lawful. But this was carried to the extremest limit. It confounded all the distinctions between the most unintentional homicide and the most deliberate murder. Public feeling sanctioned the revenging of the former by the blood of the unfortunate agent no less than of the latter. The Mosaic legislation, unable to uproot the imperfect morality of the times, tried to palliate its effects. It secured the accidental homicide from the consequences of his misfortune, if he could succeed in effecting his escape to a city which it surrounded with the sanctions of religion, before the avenger of blood overtook him. But even then it did not venture to restore him to the freedom to which he was entitled. He was compelled to remain there until the High Priest's death; if he left it before, it was at the peril of his life.

The Mosaic legislation about theft is another instance of mildness, but it was only suited where wealth was small, and where commerce was unknown. It contrasts remarkably with the harsher features of the law, which recognised



the principle of retaliation. In common with the laws of the Anglo-Saxons, it admitted a pecuniary compensation for personal injuries. This is a characteristic of all semi-barbarous races, and is no proof of a feeling of humanity. The Mosaic law likewise protects the stranger. Towards the alien Judaism in subsequent ages assumed a harsher aspect. The desert encampment contained a mixed multitude who afterwards became incorporated with the nation. The hour of Jewish exclusiveness had not yet arrived.

The first great development which took place in the Jewish mind resulted through the establishment of the Schools of the Prophets, of which Samuel was the author. The interval in religious and moral thought is great, which separates the Mosaic from the culmination of the prophetic period.

The institution of the prophets breathed an element of spirituality into Judaism. Throughout the whole course of the history of the Jewish Church, the prophetic stands in marked antagonism to the priestly and ritualistic element. These Schools seem to have been established for the express purpose of providing against it a counteracting power.

This contrast is very striking throughout the whole course of the Old Testament history. The priest performed ceremonies and rites: the prophet preached. The priest was indissolubly united with all the localizing associations of the temple worship: several of the prophets stood aloof from it altogether; and if they performed priestly functions, performed them elsewhere. They admitted the authority of the old ritual; but, like St. Paul in his estimate of the relative value of gifts and graces, they pointed out a more excellent way.

The efforts of the prophets were directed to the unfolding of the moral and spiritual elements in religion, and in enforcing on men their obligations. Compared with these, the ritual was a subject of their positive depreciation. They invariably proclaim the superiority of moral duties to ritual observances, and of the pure heart to the outward act. With them obedience is better than sacrifice, and the most acceptable worship which man can render to his Maker is the surrender of his heart. They go further, and



pronounce ritualistic worship, even though it be the Mosaic ordinances themselves, when separated from the moral and the spiritual, an abomination.

The effect exerted on the popular mind by the prophetic teaching was limited. To this abundant testimony is borne by the histories of the Kings and Chronicles. These books are marked by nearly the same moral and religious aspects as the earlier ones. The ritualistic and idolatrous element still predominates in the popular mind. Periods of reformation alternate with periods of apostasy. The moral element as witnessed by the history still continues low. But the prophetic teaching generated a select body of spiritual worshippers. The full effects of it were not manifested until after the chastisement of the Captivity. It then produced the fruit of the subversion of those idolatrous tendencies by which the people had been so long animated.

This fact is a proof against the authors of the mythic theory that the progress of such developments is a very slow one. It took no less a space of time than the whole interval between the Exodus and the Captivity firmly to plant the principles of Monotheism in the Jewish mind. If Judaism is assumed to be a development purely human, the rate of its growth is given in the interval which separates the Mosaic legislation from the culmination of the prophetic period. Will it be pretended that Christianity is separated by a less interval from the Judaism out of which it must have originated, if its origin is simply human?

But there is one development brought before us in the prophetic period of Judaism which is particularly worthy of our attention, viz., the intense spirituality of the Psalmists and of several of the prophets. It forms one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of man.

The Psalmists stand on a higher level in this respect than the Prophets, with the one exception of Isaiah. Their longings after God and desire to be like Him are intense. They appear to live in almost a continual perception of the Divine presence, though clouded with occasional fits of despondency. The whole order of the world, in their eyes, is regulated by the providential government of God. In the midst of their depressions, they still determine to hope

in Him. They have attained the perception that the rites of sacrifice can have no real value in the eyes of the Sovereign Lord of the Universe. So close is the walk with God, with which many of the Psalms present us, that the Christian Church has found them the best means of embodying her aspirations.

This spirituality is the more remarkable when we take into consideration the darkness in many important points with which it was united. The glimpses of the doctrine of man's immortality in the Psalms are few and indistinct. In the eyes of their authors this present life formed the chief scene of the moral government of God. The inequalities of Providence, and the prosperity of the wicked, frequently tried their faith to the uttermost, but yet it retained its hold. No clear view of the correction of the evils of this life in a future state arose before them. A life to come was to them a matter of hope rather than of belief. Frequently they use language which is only consistent with their having ceased to hope or expect. Hence the alternations of feeling which they present, at one time walking closely with God, at another void of the light of His countenance.

Equally remarkable is the union of a high state of spirituality with no ordinary degree of moral imperfection. In morality the Psalmists were unable to elevate themselves above their age. No ingenuity can possibly acquit many of them of entertaining sentiments which we should designate as inhuman. Their holiness is of the stern type. Their close walk with God did not generate in their minds the feelings of humanity towards enemies. Towards them all acts were lawful. The most elevated Jewish saint continued a man of blood.

It is true that they usually viewed their enemies as the enemies of God. But this has been the case with every persecutor, even with a Dominic. It is impossible to dissociate feelings of personal revenge from their denunciations of wickedness. Attempts have been frequently made to save the morality of the authors of the maledictory Psalms by representing them as impersonating the future Messiah, and as devoting to destruction, not their enemies but his. Such a theory will not endure the test of fact. The Messiah whom they are said to personate, instead of

devoting his enemies to destruction, prayed for them. The tone of these Psalms is precisely such as their authors displayed in deeds. We have a striking illustration of this in the actions of David. We see exactly the same spirit exhibited in the writings of Tertullian. He describes the horrible tortures which the persecutors of the Christians would hereafter undergo in hell. It is impossible to read his description and not to feel that he gloated over them. It would be absurd to maintain that this feeling was the simple exhibition of an extreme desire for the glory of God. The human author could not have uttered the imprecations of the Psalms without identifying himself with them.

It is hardly possible to conceive a more striking contrast than the portraiture of Jesus as it is depicted in the Gospels and the tone of the imprecatory Psalms. A solemn calmness reigns throughout even his denunciation of the Pharisees, followed by utterances of the tenderest compassion. No ray of mercy tempers the denunciation of the Psalmist. The denunciator of Judas tried even on him the effect of a final expostulation: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" But the Psalmist says of his enemy, "As he loved cursing, so let it come on him. As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones."

Nor did an interval of several hundred years modify the ruthlessness of Jewish spirit. In proof of this we have only to refer to the Psalms of the exiles in Babylon. The singing of the songs of Zion had no tendency to beget in them the mind of Christ. The Jew has been the same in all ages, terrible in suffering, and terrible in revenge.

The high spirituality of the Psalmist did not succeed in liberating him from the effects of that moral atmosphere which he habitually breathed. His morality was that of an Oriental, who was accustomed to pour out blood like water. In David also it was united with no small amount of sensualism.

Although the later prophets did not display the elevated spirituality of the Psalmists, they had attained a higher tone of morality. In Ezekiel we find that the old notion, that God actually punished children for the sins of their

parents, had become exploded. The prophet distinctly teaches the entire equity of the Divine character, and that it would be displayed in rewarding and punishing every man in accordance with his own works alone. In this prophet we have the idea presented to us of sin as a personal act meriting personal chastisement, and of God as a righteous judge, who would not confound the righteous with the wicked.

The general aspect of the Jewish saint, both in the historical and prophetic books, presents us with a character framed on a different basis from that of our Lord. He distinctly told his followers that they were to exhibit a wholly different spirit. He would not have them resemble even the greatest of the prophets, Elijah.

In one book of the Old Testament we have the presence of a milder spirit, the Book of Proverbs. Its author bears little of the character of a saint, and its pages present us with few indications of the prophetic fire. Its morality is the embodiment of worldly-wise prudence. It never rises to the spirit of self-sacrifice. It contains the precept: "If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will reward thee." Its author was a philosopher, who had reflected much, and had observed that vengeance does not always pay.

The Book of Job is one in which few of the peculiarities of Judaism exist. It is of a far more world-wide character. It recognises a higher type of moral obligation. Its author had deeply meditated on creation and providence, but their mysteries he was unable to unlock. Its spirit is far more catholic than that of any other book in the Old Testament. When or by whom it was written is uncertain, but it is evident that its influence on the Jewish mind must have been small. This is proved by the strong contrast which it presents to the tone of thought and feeling exhibited in the other books of the Canon, not excepting the later prophets.

But it will be necessary to point out the relation in which the doctrine of the immortality of the soul stands both to the legal and prophetic developments of Judaism, and the views which were entertained respecting man's responsibility.

The Pentateuch does not contain a single allusion to the

immortality of man, except it be in the passage referred to by our Lord. The reference to it in that passage is only by way of inference; and when our Lord explained it in that sense, it excited the astonishment of the people. The historical books are wholly silent on it, for the supposed bringing up of Samuel from the Under-world by the witch of Endor cannot be called an exception. We have already noticed the position occupied by this doctrine in the works of the Psalmists. In Isaiah and Ezekiel it may be said to have developed itself in a vague form; but it is nowhere directly asserted. Both prophets seem to have looked forward to a participation in the glories of the future kingdom of God. In the Book of Daniel we meet with an unequivocal recognition of it.

Whatever may have been the opinion of the Psalmists or the Prophets respecting it, it was held by them simply as hope. We never once find them employing it for the purpose of enforcing moral obligation or religious practice.

The Jew, during the whole period which is occupied by the Old Testament history, looked on this present life as the scene on which the moral government of God was to receive its vindication. He expected that temporal prosperity would be the reward of obedience, and suffering the punishment of sin. He contemplated God as the moral governor of the world, but he expected that He would vindicate the equity of His government by temporal sanctions.

Whatever may have been the views of the more eminent Psalmists and Prophets, it is evident that they had not affected the belief of the masses. These probably entertained, as all other nations have done, some general ideas about an Under-world; but of no potency to enforce the principles of moral obligation. Several of the Psalmists viewed death as the termination of man's hopes and fears. Even to so eminent a saint as Hezekiah, the Under-world is a region of midnight darkness. "The grave," says he, "cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."—(Isa. xxxviii.)

The historical books put this in a striking aspect. The greatest calamity with which the idolatrous kings of Israel are threatened by the prophets is the cutting off their



posterity, and the exposure of their unburied bodies to the animals of prey. Even as late as the time of Jehoiachim, Jeremiah threatens him, as a reward for his iniquities, with the burial of an ass. We have here an attempt to extend the penalties of sin to a period beyond that of life. But we have no hint of the consequences with which sin would be attended in the unseen world. Is it possible that the prophet would have omitted them, if he had thought that they would exert any influence on those before whose eyes the lesser terror is held up?

The silence of the Book of Job on this subject, with the exception of one solitary passage of very doubtful meaning, is the strongest proof of the little influence of the doctrine in earlier ages, as bearing on the question of responsibility of man. The absence of all reference to it is the more remarkable, because we find in this book no trace of the peculiarities of Judaism. It is wholly devoid of the conception of a theocracy. If a body of Christians had assembled to discuss the questions at issue between Job and his friends, the doctrine of a future state must inevitably have occupied a prominent place in the discussion. The entire argument is on the moral government of God. Job's friends assert that a man's condition in this life is a certain criterion of his character, and that Job's sufferings are a proof that he was a bad man. They, therefore, felt certain that he must have been a hypocrite. Job, on the contrary, asserts that experience proves that prosperity is frequently the lot of the wicked, and adversity of the righteous; but he is utterly unable to offer any solution of the enigma consistently with the attributes of God. He earnestly denies the charge of hypocrisy, makes passionate appeals, and almost impious complaints to heaven, and hopes that his innocence will be made to appear. He even prays for death, not, however, that he may enter a world where the inequalities of Providence will be redressed, but that he may be free from suffering in the silence of the grave.

It is evident that if either Job or his friends had entertained any distinct views respecting a future state of retribution, it must have formed the most important consideration in their argument. The friends could not have reasoned as they have, if they had not believed that the present life is the only stage in which God's moral govern-



ment is exhibited. Job could have instantly refuted them, by referring to their common belief that the inequalities of Providence were to be corrected in a future world.

The doctrine of a future state forms the only solution of the subject of debate. Each party shows great acuteness in maintaining his own views with such weapons as they were in possession of. Yet the doctrine is passed over by both parties as if it were not of the smallest argumentative value. They find the problem incapable of solution. After it has been debated in every form, the Deity himself is introduced as a speaker at the conclusion of the drama. But it is most remarkable that even He ends the controversy, not by declaring that the inequalities of Providence shall be redressed in a future state, or that Job's sufferings were intended to qualify him for the enjoyments of it, but by pointing out the incomprehensible nature of His works and ways, and the inability of man to penetrate their depths. The whole of His address contains not a single reference to man's immortality.

Even in those prophets who present us with indications of a hope of the immortality of man, the sanctions by which the duties of religion and morality are enforced are always of a temporal character. God is exhibited as the revenger of sin, and the rewarder of virtue in this life. They never found the doctrine of man's responsibility on the belief of his immortality.

The moral effect of this doctrine of responsibility, as exhibited in the Old Testament, is diminished by its being enforced by considerations bearing on this life alone. In proportion as this retribution was not realized, the sense of responsibility founded on the belief that God was a rewarder of the righteous, and a punisher of the ungodly, must have been weakened.

But it may be replied that although the appeal to temporal rewards as an inducement to the practice of virtue is a very weak one under the ordinary government of God, the case was widely different under a theocracy. Under such a form of government He must exhibit Himself as a rewarder of men according to their deeds in this life.

But however obedience or disobedience may have affected the prosperous or the adverse condition of the Jewish nation, it is evident that to individuals the moral govern-

ment of God under the theocracy did not widely differ from its present aspect. To the truth of this every page of the Old Testament testifies. Both the Psalmists and the Prophets concur in representing that nothing was more common than the sight of the wicked prospering and of the holy suffering, and that these apparent imperfections in God's moral government were to them sources of bitter trial. The anxious manner in which they ask for a solution of the problem shows that it was the deepest disappointment to them that God's moral government was not better vindicated by the punishment of the ungodly.

The expectation of prosperity as a consequence of virtue, and of suffering as a certain result of sin in this life, constituted the weak point in the Jewish doctrine of responsibility. Sin then, as now, frequently triumphed, and holiness was depressed, and when this happened, a sense of responsibility which was not founded on a doctrine of immortality could impart no additional strength to the motives of the moral law.

In proportion as the idea that a righteous retribution was rendered to men in this life according to their deeds was weakened, the belief in a future state, in which a purer aspect of God's moral government would be exhibited, increased. It was impossible to be otherwise while the mind retained a firm hold on the providential government of God. A greatly altered view of the subject was gradually introduced by means of the depressed condition of the Jewish people after the return from the Captivity, who, with a short interval of independence, continued subject to a succession of heathen masters.

The existence of the idea that the present world was the theatre of man's moral retribution—the imperfect manner in which this was realized, and the earnest desire which it created for something holier and better, tended greatly to promote the expectation that a kingdom of God yet remained to be established, which ultimately expanded itself into the conception of the kingdom of the Messiah. Into the nature of these expectations it will now be necessary to inquire.

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## CHAPTER IX.

## MESSIANIC CONCEPTIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

It will be readily conceded that the creation of the idea of a Messiah was the most important preparation made in the whole course of previous history for the advent of Christianity. The impugnors of the historical character of the Gospels assert that the portraiture in which Jesus is presented in them is a direct growth out of that idea, and a simple development of it. Their opponents maintain that a wide interval separates the one from the other; but allow that it was an important portion of the course of preparation by which his advent was introduced. If Christianity had been only a little in advance of Judaism, the transition from the one to the other would have been comparatively easy. The wider the interval which separates them the greater the difficulty of conceiving the possibility that the one has been developed out of the other by the mere action of the laws which regulate the progress of the human mind.

It is evident therefore that the impugnor of the historical character of the Gospels has an interest in reducing the interval which separates Judaism and Christianity to the smallest possible dimensions. Unless he can make the interval a small one, the historical conditions of the case render the creation of the conception of the Jesus of the Gospels out of the state of thought and feeling in which it originated, an impossibility. The time during which it must have originated and grown into perfection would be far too short for the process. On the other hand, those who take an opposite view are no less interested in widening the interval to the utmost.

But the position occupied by our opponents enables them only to make a partial use of this advantage. They are ready enough to reduce the conception of the original portraiture of Jesus to the dimensions of an ordinary Jew, and to assert that the additions to it are the result of legendary or mythical creation. But at the same time they reduce the development of the Messianic ideas in the Old Testament to a minimum.

The reason of this is obvious. The admission of the

existence of a large amount of Messianic conception in the writings of the Old Testament in the direction of the Jesus of the Gospels involves the concession of an element of prophecy. This is at once to admit the existence of the supernatural, which it is the object of the theory to disprove. The chief reason for denying the historical character of the Gospels is the miraculous element which they contain. In the necessity of minimizing the Old Testament delineations of a Messiah by denying the prophetic element, our opponents put themselves to a disadvantage. They would otherwise gain an interval of a thousand years to aid them in the creation by human means of the Evangelical portraiture of our Lord.

On the other hand, Christian advocates are no less prone to exaggerate the extent of this prophetic element than their opponents are to deny it. They rest on prophecy as the main proof of the divine origin of the Gospel, and forget that there is one equally potent, viz., the impossibility of developing the Evangelical conception of Jesus out of the previous elements of Jewish and Gentile thought during the period which history assigns for its elaboration. They are prone, therefore, to adopt every device of interpretation by which a near resemblance to the Evangelical delineation can be found in the pages of the Old Testament. Instead of reading them with the eyes with which their authors, and those to whom the Old Testament Scriptures were addressed, must have viewed them, they reflect back on the Old Testament a light which exists nowhere but in the pages of the New.

It will be necessary, therefore, for us rigidly to determine the precise degree in which the Old Testament contains a delineation of the Jesus of the Gospels in its alleged Messianic predictions.

We shall not examine the question whether prophecies really exist in the Old Testament. Our argument only renders it necessary that we should assign their proper weight to those portions of the Old Testament which are claimed as Messianic. Certain delineations are therein contained as matters of fact quite apart from the question as to what was the intention of the writer. The question for us to consider is, how far are such passages developments in the direction of Christianity, and to what extent could they

have suggested to the authors of the Gospels the portraiture of Jesus; and how far did the Old Testament dispensation prepare the way for the Gospel?

It is obvious that a prophecy which was previously obscure, may become sufficiently plain after its fulfilment. Such prophecies can only in a very limited sense be said to be developments in the direction of Christianity. If they required the advent of Christianity to make their meaning obvious, they can have had little influence in creating it. They may have generated certain ideas, but can have contributed nothing to the actual portraiture of the Messiah.

To this class of prophecies belongs the typology of the Old Testament. We are not going to discuss its nature, or even the truth of its existence. A few words of remark on it will be necessary to explain our position respecting it.

It is perfectly conceivable that revelation, like creation, is formed on a general plan. It is an unquestionable fact that a system of typical ideas runs throughout nature. All her earlier growths are in a measure types of her later developments. The types of the human hand and foot exist in all the vertebrate animals. They exist in embryo. But the animal must be produced in which the typical form is completely developed, before we can form an adequate conception of the original type. To use a Scriptural expression, the type "must be fulfilled"\* in the perfected idea before we can realize its intention. If we suppose an animal in which the rudiments of the hand existed undeveloped, to have been possessed of reason, it would not have been able to form any conception of the elaborate construction of the human hand from its own undeveloped typical form, although it actually possessed it in embryo.

It is quite conceivable that if Christianity be a revelation, a plan may underlie all its developments, as it unquestionably underlies nature. If such is the case, a typology, or Christianity in embryo, may exist in Judaism, in the same manner in which the human hand or arm does in the horse,

\* The Greek *ἵνα πληρώθῃ* would be best expressed in English by the words "that it might be filled up full," as in the second post-communion collect of the Church of England, the words "that we may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction," evidently bear this meaning.



or even in the serpent. But such types afford no means of predicting the reality towards which they point. It is perfectly legitimate to say, now that man has been created, that the typical undeveloped form contained in earlier animals was fulfilled in him. The assertion may be equally correct, that typical forms of Judaism were fulfilled in Christ. After their fulfilment, the typical designs or general plan may be traced. But previously it was incapable of suggesting its antitype. Our inquiry is not into the nature of types and prophecies generally, but whether such typical forms existed in Judaism as could have suggested to the authors of the Gospels the portraiture of their Jesus; or whether there were types, or prophecies, or conceptions in Judaism, call them by what name we please, which could by a natural process have developed into Christianity, or in what way Judaism was instrumental in preparing the way for its appearance.

To the Christian the Gospel conception of Jesus is reflected back on the prophetic Scriptures. He possesses the substance, and thinks that he can discover it in the shadow. But we do not want to know what the prophecies may mean with the light of Christianity reflected on them, but what they actually did mean to the Jew. A type in nature points towards its fulfilment in man, but it would not have enabled us to form a distinct conception of the wonderful adaptations which are displayed in the human hand. In a similar manner, in estimating an alleged type or prophecy, we want to determine in what manner it really pointed towards the Jesus of the Gospels, and what is the interval which separates him from it, and what aid it would have afforded a body of mythologists in developing the idea of a Christ.

It will be at once conceded that the earlier books contain only Messianic predictions of a very shadowy character. They contain promises, not predictions, and present us with no Messianic conception. To this there is only one exception, the description of a Prophet who was to arise at some later period like unto Moses.

The possible Messianic influence of this passage does not depend on the date which we assign to the Book of Deuteronomy, or whether it was the intention of its author to describe the advent of a single prophet, or of a succession

of prophetic teachers. It unquestionably formed a portion of this book at a time long anterior to the advent. As such it must have tended to produce an expectation of the appearance of a great prophet of the future, with attributes and authority not inferior to those attributed to the Jewish legislator. When the expectation of such a prophet had once been generated the days of the darkness of latter Judaism must have tended to intensify the desire for his approach. It should be observed that this great predicted prophet is invested simply with the attributes of a man.

But ideas strictly Messianic only appear in the Psalmists and the later prophets.

In the Psalmists they exist in germs only, and typical forms. We need not enter on the inquiry whether the writers viewed them as Messianic. The principle on which they are formed is evident. They are directly applicable to a man then actually living, or they form an idealized conception of some eminent character in Jewish history. They are chiefly either uttered by David, or ascribed to him in his character of theocratic King. As such they contain utterances which are not strictly true of any human being. They may be described as David idealized. But in the midst of this idealization we find close descriptions of the feelings and of the infirmities of the historic David.

These idealizations therefore would naturally tend to create the expectation of a yet future King, in whom they were to receive a more adequate realization. It was evident that the whole of them had not been accomplished in the historic David, or his son Solomon. But the mixture of David's personality with the idealization must have darkened the expectations which, if it had stood singly, it would have been calculated to excite.

The history of the actual David supplies the subject matter for these idealizations. David is the original prototype on which they are formed, and around whose person they cluster. The ideality of the conception admits of a succession of partial fulfilments approximating to the full conception of the original idea. The absolute filling up of that idea, or the complete embodiment of the original conception, is that which is so often referred to in the New Testament, by the words "ἵνα πληρωθῇ." But the actual

conception of the historic David was the only thing to which a mythologist could have looked when he attempted to develop the idea.

These Messianic Psalms possess a common character so distinct, that we need not refer to any single particular. They ascribe to David or Solomon a future kingdom which was to establish a supremacy over the nations, and to be bounded by what was conceived to be the limits of the habitable globe. Their reign was to be a reign of peace and blessedness. In this capacity attributes superhuman, if not divine, are ascribed to them. They were to rule and break in pieces the heathen nations with a rod of iron. Their throne was to be established in justice and judgment.

In the 2nd Psalm Solomon is idealized as God's Son, and as on that day begotten of Him. The nations are exhorted to kiss him lest they perish in his wrath.

In the 45th Psalm he is idealized at his marriage, and is described as a divine conqueror. His sceptre is one of righteousness. He is addressed with the divine title. God has anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows. The 72nd Psalm contains a yet more magnificent description of him as a theocratic King.

The 89th Psalm was evidently written in times posterior to David. It is very remarkable as enunciating all the previous idealization of him as a theocratic King, and the divine promises made to him in that capacity. The writer, however, distinctly recognised the fact that they had never yet been realised in him or his descendants. He bemoans the desolations which had befallen his house. He admits that the promise had been conditional, but in the midst of existing desolations he is almost tempted to expostulate with God as if He had forgotten it. Still he looks forward to a fulfilment in the future. This is the first passage in which a future fulfilment of the idealization is distinctly recognized, and may therefore be considered as the most purely Messianic of all the Psalms.

The larger proportion of the Messianic Psalms contains delineations of the greatness and the holiness of the idealized David. But there are Psalms which idealize David, or at any rate the author who composed them, as a sufferer. We say, idealize him, because although they

contain descriptions of sufferings which he actually underwent, it is evident that some portions of those ascribed to him, in their literal sense, he did not actually endure. Of these, the most remarkable is the 22nd Psalm. The 88th is evidently an idealization, and not a description of actual sufferings. A few others are of a similar description. They are all founded on the occurrences of the life of the actual David.

Both these species of Psalms are directly referred to in the New Testament as prophetic. Their idealization is fulfilled in the character of the Jesus therein portrayed. When the reality is presented to us, we can see that in all its great outlines, the type and the antitype correspond. But this is no measure of the conception which the two-fold delineation would produce in the mind of the Jew. All which could be presented to him would be the two delineations of a triumphant King and a suffering David. As they were evidently ideal descriptions of him in both characters, he might consider that they pointed to something yet future. But of the future reality, it would scarcely give him even a faint conception.

Several other Psalms present us with the same conception more or less perfectly idealized.

In the Prophets we meet with the same principle yet more fully developed. The idealizations are not confined to the person of David or to his family. Throughout a whole section of Isaiah we have a delineation of an ideal character under the name of the Servant of Jehovah.

In addition to those delineations in Isaiah more or less directly Messianic, large portions of the prophecy are occupied with descriptions of the glories of the future kingdom of God. But as these are not directly Messianic, we shall pass them over in silence. Many of them might have been fulfilled without the intervention of a Messianic King.

The first of Isaiah's prophecies wearing a Messianic aspect begins with his seventh chapter. The Prophet promises to Ahaz, as a sign of deliverance from a confederacy between Israel and Syria, that a virgin should conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel. This prediction, is, however, strictly limited by the Prophet to the times then present, as the birth was not only to be

a sign of deliverance from their enemies, but both the hostile kings were to forsake their countries before the child was grown. The same conception is continued in the following chapter, but in the ninth we meet with this wonderful birth in an idealized form, in which a child is described, who is invested with attributes of a divine character. He is described as Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and as to receive royal authority on the throne of David, without limits as to its duration.

The latter portion of the prediction is evidently an idealized conception. Its direct bearing is on existing events. But it is evident that no events of an historic kind could have realized the lofty idealizations of the Prophet in the latter portion of his prophecy. It may be called a poetic exaggeration of historical events; or it may be said that the expectations of the Prophet were raised to a height which was never realized. But whatever may have been the direct reference of the language, it is evident that no ordinary human event could be the adequate measure of the latter portion of the description. We are not discussing the question whether the Jesus of the Evangelists is their intended fulfilment. All that we assert is that they embody a highly ideal conception. As such they may well have prepared the way for the idea of the Messiah, and supplied some portion of the conceptions included in it.

In the 10th chapter the Prophet continues a similar idealization in the person of a Branch who was to arise out of the stem of Jesse. But he presents us with a different aspect of his character. The richest intellectual gifts of the Divine Spirit are to rest on him. He is to redress the wrongs of the present state of things, and avenge the cause of the poor and helpless. The wicked are to be destroyed by him, and he is to inaugurate a reign of universal holiness and peace, during which all fierce and noxious animals are to change their nature. The Gentiles are to seek him, and put themselves under his government, and God is to gather together the dispersed Jews from all quarters of the earth.

Whether the Prophet expected to see this state of things



realized in his own time it is useless to inquire. It is sufficient to observe that his words contain a description to which the facts of history refuse to correspond. As such they may have suggested ideas of a more complete realization in the future. Such passages, therefore, may be considered to be among those which awakened the desire for the appearance of such a deliverer, and helped to frame the conception of him.

It is also evident that in this passage the Messianic conception has undergone a development beyond that which is to be found in any of the preceding prophecies.

We must pass on to the 32nd chapter before we can find another passage of similar import. This again is closely connected with and grows out of the events of contemporary history. The Prophet is dilating on the evil of trusting in the support of Egypt to free Judæa from the dangers impending over it from Assyria. He assures the Jews of a divine defence, and of the impending destruction of the Assyrian power. In the midst of this the conception arises before him of the reign of a righteous King, such a king as the events of history do not present.

All these descriptions, however, are general. They contain the abstract idea, and nothing more. They present us with no portraiture of a living being. All which they do is to bring before the mind a general conception of the rise of a future King, who should inaugurate a reign of righteousness and peace. They represent him as at once arriving at success, and overbearing all opposition. They give no hint that the success is to be preceded by a period of humiliation and struggle. They do not advance one step towards dramatising his character in action. The whole is a vague sketch or outline.

From the 40th to the 53rd chapter we enter on a different phasis of Messianic prophecy. At several places in this section a person is presented to us under the designation of the Servant of Jehovah. He is invested with attributes which may be considered Messianic, and presents us with a more distinct portraiture than any other conception in the Old Testament.

In this portion of the prophecy five characters are presented to our view; that of Jehovah; the Servant of

Jehovah; an ideal Israel; the actual Israel; and the Prophet himself.

The ideal Israel embodies the prophet's conception of what the Jewish people ought to have been in their covenant relationship to God, as distinct from what they actually were.

Throughout the greater portion of this section Jehovah is introduced as the speaker, proclaiming His own omnipotence, and revealing Himself in the capacity of the Saviour. He reveals all His glorious attributes, promises redemption to His people, and invites the actual Israel to participate in His salvation.

In the 41st chapter we first meet with the conception of the Servant of Jehovah, who is here evidently the ideal conception of the Jewish people. Jehovah addresses him, "Thou Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." This is followed by a succession of promises.

The Servant of Jehovah again appears in the 42nd chapter, and it is impossible to separate him from the idealized Israel of the preceding chapter, as there is no change in the persons of the drama, and it is a continuation of the address of the same Divine speaker. Here he is invested with Messianic attributes. He is described as Jehovah's elect, in whom His soul delighted, and as destined to show judgment to the Gentiles. He is invested with the attributes of meekness, mildness, and perseverance. He is set forth as a covenant to the people, and a light to the Gentiles. He is destined to open the eyes of the blind, and to set free the prisoners. Jehovah then proclaims His name, and that He will not give His glory to another. The conception of Jehovah and that of His servant, are maintained by the prophet entirely distinct. The latter is invested with no attribute properly divine.

The 43rd chapter opens with another idealized conception of Israel. Jehovah claims him to Himself. At the tenth verse we are again introduced to the Servant of Jehovah, in the capacity of His witness. Shortly after Jehovah addresses the actual Israel in terms of expostulation. Here a clear distinction is made between the actual and the ideal Israel.

The 44th chapter again presents us with the idealized

Israel as Jehovah's Servant, who receives a succession of promises, and to whom Jehovah proclaims His omnipotence. A representation is next given of the character of the actual Israel. Then the idealized Israel is again addressed as the Servant of Jehovah, with assurances of favour and pardon, for whose sake a deliverer is raised up in the person of Cyrus, who is expressly called and girded for his work, for the sake of Jacob, Jehovah's Servant, and Israel His elect. A special commission is then given to Cyrus for the destruction of Babylon and the downfall of idolatry.

The 48th chapter opens with an address of Jehovah, not to the ideal, but to the actual Israel. The Divine speaker announces His purpose to purify and redeem them. In the midst of this address He makes this declaration, "From the time that it was, there am I, and now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent me." He then summons Israel to go forth from Babylon, and declares that He has redeemed His servant Jacob.

In all these instances the personality of Jehovah and His Servant, the idealized Israel, are kept by the prophet entirely distinct.

In the 49th chapter a speaker is introduced who designates himself by the name of Israel, and declares himself to be formed from the womb to be the Servant of Jehovah. He describes himself as having been discouraged at the greatness of his work, but as supported in it by the strength of God. His special office is to bring the actual Israel near to Him; and he declares that though he fail in the attempt, he shall still be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah. He announces himself as appointed to bring salvation to the Gentiles. Jehovah then proceeds to address this Servant in the language of encouragement, and declares that he was appointed for a covenant of the people. Zion is introduced as a separate character, bemoaning her desolations, and is comforted with promises not uttered by the Servant of Jehovah, but by Jehovah Himself.

The Servant of Jehovah again appears as a speaker in the 50th chapter. He describes himself as exposed to sufferings and contempt, yet as firmly bent on the performance of his work, trusting in the aid of the Almighty.

In the 52nd and 53rd chapters we are introduced to the last appearance of the Servant of Jehovah. It is by far the

most remarkable of them all. It is the well-known description of him as the Man of sorrows. Though acting prudently, he has a visage more marred than any man, yet he is to sprinkle nations, while kings shut their mouths at him. He has neither form nor comeliness; he is despised and rejected of men. He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows. He is wounded for our transgressions, smitten of God and afflicted. The Lord lays on him the iniquity of us all. He is unresisting as a lamb, and cut off by a violent death. He is stricken not for his own sin, but for those of the people. His soul is made a sin-offering; he bears the sins of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. In return for this, he shall see his seed, and prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands.

This forms the most remarkable Messianic passage in the Old Testament. In the conception of the Servant of Jehovah, the prophet has advanced a stage farther than the mere prediction of the advent of a King of Peace out of the family of David, who was worthily to fill the throne of the theocracy and enlighten the Gentiles. He has attempted to dramatise a character. Both Jehovah, His Servant, and the literal Israel, are introduced as speakers in this drama.

This is important, because it enables us to estimate the degree in which this idealized Servant of Jehovah approaches to the full conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists.

The difference is striking. The one presents the appearance of idealization only; the other that of an historic reality. The Servant of Jehovah is a mere sketch without any substantial form. The Jesus of the Gospels is a portrait copied from the life. The Servant of Jehovah is human. The Jesus of the Evangelists is human and divine.

It is impossible to avoid coming to the conclusion, from the careful perusal of this section, that the Servant of Jehovah and the idealized Israel are the same conception. This at once strips it of the divine, which forms so remarkable an element in the Evangelical conception of Jesus. Throughout the whole of the section Jehovah is introduced as a separate person, revealing his self-existence, proclaiming himself the Saviour, and announcing the advent of redemption. The idea of the Servant of Jehovah, with the

exception of one or two very imperfect glimpses of the divine, is human throughout. Such is the natural result of its original conception, an idealized Israel, a Jewish people, not such as it was, but as it ought to have been.

The idea, however, contains a difficulty in representing an ideal Israel labouring to effect the redemption of the actual Israel. It appears to have finally developed itself in the prophet's mind into the conception of a perfect man, devoutly bent on fulfilling the will and purpose of Jehovah.

The portrait however, with which he presents us, stands at a distance very remote from the conception of the living Jesus. He is described as the elect and beloved, and the delight of Jehovah, as invested with humility and meekness, as firmly bent amidst all difficulties on fulfilling Jehovah's will; as reposing in His strength, and sustained through His protection, yet as subject to discouragement. He is ordained to be the deliverer of the literal Israel, and the enlightener of the Gentiles; though highly exalted and extolled, he is marred in visage more than any man; he is rejected and despised, deeply acquainted with sorrows, yet patient and unresisting as a lamb, and pouring out his soul to death to avert the consequences of the sins of others. It pleases Jehovah to bruise him and to put him to grief for the transgressions of his people. By his patient submission to suffering the pleasure of Jehovah prospers in his hands. Such is the portraiture with which the future Servant of Jehovah was to be invested.

It is evident that in the Servant of Jehovah we find in outline several of the human elements of the history of Jesus. But it is a bare and unsubstantial one, shorn of its divine element, and undramatised in a single act. The difference between this and the evangelical delineation of him is no less great than that which separates the rudimentary conception of the animal frame from its full development in the living man. No mythologist could ever have succeeded in portraying from such an outline the living Jesus of the Gospels.

The prophet has nowhere presented us with a Messiah who unites the divine and the human in his own person. The divine is exhibited in the person of the theocratic King; the human in that of the Servant of Jehovah. No hint is given us of their intended union.



After this section, we part company with the person of the Servant of Jehovah. The subsequent portions of the prophecy, while they dilate on the glory of the latter kingdom of God in the most lofty strains, give us a less explicit portraiture of a Messianic character. In the 55th chapter, a brief glimpse of such a person appears in an idealized David, who is described as given as a leader and commander to the people, and who is to gather to himself unknown nations. After a considerable interval, another speaker appears (chap. lxi.) who announces that the Spirit of the Lord God is upon him, because the Lord has annointed him to rectify all the evils occasioned by oppression ; to publish glad tidings to the meek, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God. Unless we suppose that another speaker is introduced without warning in the prophetic drama, this same speaker is represented as assuming to himself the Divine name, and as then declaring that he would greatly rejoice in Jehovah, and that his soul should be joyful in his God, by whom he has been clothed in the garments of salvation, and arrayed in the robe of righteousness. This speaker continues his address through the succeeding chapter.

The person here presented to us is Divine throughout, without any of the attributes of humanity, except that he recognises the existence of a Jehovah, who is his God, in whom he will greatly rejoice, and who is the source of his own various perfections.

In chapter 63, two speakers are introduced, one questioning the other. The one questioned declares that his garments are blood-stained from treading in the wine-press, which he has trodden alone and unaided. He abstains from directly designating himself Jehovah, but he describes himself as effecting salvation by his own inherent right, and as crushing his enemies to the dust. The same speaker then proceeds to refer to the loving kindness of another Divine person, whom he designates as Jehovah, and then identifies himself with the idealized Israel. He is distinguished from the actual Israel, but describes himself as united to it by the bonds of the closest sympathy.

This passage presents us with the nearest approach to the conception of a union of the divine and human to be

found in the Old Testament. The portraiture is shadowy, and occasionally obscure. The conception of an idealized Israel as it is here presented to us, is that of a divine, and not of a suffering humanity.

The Messianic prophecies of the remaining prophets lie within a very narrow compass. Jeremiah presents us with two only. He describes a righteous Branch to be raised up to David, who was as a King to reign and prosper, and to execute judgment and justice in the earth, and was to effect a restoration of the Jewish people to their own land. He also describes an ideal David who was to act in the same character. Whatever spiritual senses may have been assigned by Christians to the book of Lamentations, it is impossible that a Jew could have viewed them as Messianic till after the event.

No less brief are the Messianic allusions in Ezekiel. They are confined to an ideal David, who was to act as a shepherd to Israel, and was to be a prince among them, and to establish an everlasting covenant of peace.

But in Daniel, although the Messianic allusions are not numerous, the idea has undergone considerable development. It may be said in this prophet to have attained its highest culmination.

First, the prophet introduces us to the conception of a kingdom of God in a form differing from all earthly kingdoms. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream it is designated as having an origin wholly distinct from them, as grinding them to powder, and as gradually filling the earth in their stead. To it is made the promise of an everlasting duration. It is described as a kingdom directly set up by the God of heaven.

In Isaiah we have seen the human portion of the Messianic conception in the form of an ideal Israel. In Daniel it is developed a stage considerably further. Instead of an ideal Israel, it has grown into the conception of "The Son of Man."

In Ezekiel we repeatedly meet with this designation applied to the prophet's person. In Daniel it mounts up into the conception of human nature in a personified form, elevated to the highest degree of glorification.

The prophet in vision describes himself as beholding the overthrow of all human and usurping power. The

Ancient of Days appears attended by tens of thousands of ministering servants, and seats himself on his fiery throne for judgment. On this there appears *one like unto the Son of Man*. He comes with the clouds of heaven, and is presented before the Ancient of Days, *i.e.* the eternal God. There is given to him dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him, and his dominion is pronounced to be of everlasting duration.

This conception involves an idealization not only of a perfect Israel, but of perfect humanity exalted to the supreme height of universal rule. As such it is essentially Messianic. Still the divine and the human are presented to us as entirely distinct. The one is exhibited in the person of the Ancient of Days, the other in that of the Son of Man. There is no tendency towards a fusion of the one with the other. In the conception of the Son of Man we have the glorification of perfected humanity.

In the 9th chapter the Son of Man is presented to us under the designation of the Messiah. In the former vision he was exhibited in a state of glorification. In this he unites in his person an exhibition of suffering with glorification. In this twofold aspect there is a close connection between the conception of Daniel and Isaiah's Servant of Jehovah. He receives an additional designation of the Most Holy, and is called Messiah the Prince. The purpose of his appearing is declared to be to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. Though a Prince, he is to be cut off, but not for himself; after which the Jewish dispensation is to be made to cease.

The reader cannot fail to observe the close connection between the Messianic conceptions of the book of Daniel and those of the apocryphal book of Enoch, which we shall consider presently. There can be no doubt that the author of the latter book was well acquainted with the former. It is worthy, however, of particular observation, that in the book of Enoch all allusion to the Messiah as one who was to suffer is carefully avoided, and yet it is impossible to believe that its author was unacquainted with this portion of his character as it is exhibited in Daniel. It must therefore have been designedly suppressed.

The prophets after the Captivity contain a few Messianic allusions; but the idea receives little additional development. Haggai, to encourage the Jews in rebuilding their temple, promises them that within a little time the Desire of all nations shall come. In Zechariah the conception is developed under the figure of a Branch, who was to build the temple of the Lord, and to reign a Priest on his throne. In a subsequent chapter the prophet announces the advent of this priestly King, lowly and sitting on an ass, and promises him dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. In chapter xiii. a sword is invoked to awake against the Shepherd of the Lord. In Malachi we meet with one Messianic image, the rising of the Sun of righteousness. He also promises a visit of the Lord to his temple, under the designation of "the Lord whom ye seek," "the Messenger of the Covenant;" and announces the appearance of Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Such are the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament. They consist of a number of undeveloped outlines, devoid of all substantial form. They best answer to the conception of types, rather than prophecies, and present a close analogy to the typical forms of the natural world. These types admit of being filled up to their complete conception, to which the term fulfilment is given in the New Testament. As man is in this sense the fulfilment of the natural typical form, so Christ is the fulfilment of the types of the Old Testament prophecy. It is evident from this examination of them, that they would have been able to afford but little assistance to persons who set themselves to the work of conceiving and dramatising an actual Messianic person, such as the Jesus of the Evangelists. The utmost that they could have effected would have been to supply a few indistinct outlines, but the whole substantial form of his spiritual, religious, and moral portraiture would have been entirely wanting. To create this the mythologists must have had recourse to their simple powers of invention. The Old Testament could not even have supplied them with any thing which can be properly designated a model.

## CHAPTER X.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MESSIANIC CONCEPTION BETWEEN  
THE TERMINATION OF THE PROPHETIC PERIOD  
AND THE ADVENT.

THE imperfection of our materials is a considerable hindrance in tracing the growth of the Messianic conception during this period. For one portion of it the statements of the Gospels, confirmed as they are by the subsequent developments of the Jewish mind, supply us with a firm historical foundation. Our remaining sources of information are confined to apocryphal books, the date of which cannot be ascertained with any thing approaching to certainty.

Of these by far the most important is the book of Enoch. If it could be established that this book was composed in its present form previously to the Advent, it would afford proof that the conception of the Messiah had received a development in some points considerably in advance of that which is presented to us in the Old Testament Scriptures.

As it has been asserted that this book was well known to Christ and the Apostles, on account of certain resemblances in thought and expression to portions of the New Testament, and that it materially contributed to the formation of the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists, it will be necessary to give a brief consideration to its Messianic character.

It is unquestionable that it contains passages highly Messianic. The important point to be determined is whether they were composed prior or subsequent to the Christian era.

Respecting the precise date of this book there is a great conflict of opinion. Although in its present form it was most probably put together by a single hand, it bears evident indications of having originally consisted of several portions which have been united into one. Many critics assign its composition to the fifty years preceding the Christian era. Others to a still earlier period. Equally uncertain is the date when its various parts were composed. Others, on the contrary, place its composition, at any rate



that of those passages which are pre-eminently Messianic, subsequent to the birth of Christ.

The external evidence respecting its date is small. But it is impossible to deny that strong reasons may be adduced from the internal evidence on both sides of the question. It is difficult to say whether the reasons are the stronger for its pre-Christian or post-Christian origin.

Its careful perusal establishes one thing beyond contradiction. Very close agreements both in conception and expression exist between parts of this book and portions of the New Testament. The resemblances between it and the book of Revelation are the most numerous. But there are several unquestionable resemblances between it and other portions of the New Testament, not even excepting the Gospels. Many of these are so striking as to force on us the conclusion, either that the writer of the book of Enoch was acquainted with those portions of the New Testament, or that the authors of the latter were acquainted with Enoch and adopted its phraseology.

Several of these resemblances may be accounted for by the fact that the authors had a common ground for them in the writings of the Old Testament, which they mutually imitated. It is certain that the writer of the book of Enoch was well acquainted with that of Daniel, and with the Old Testament generally. But there are numerous resemblances between this book and the New Testament for which this solution will not account.

These resemblances, but more especially those between it and the Revelation, are almost invariably expansions of corresponding thoughts and conceptions in the latter book. The similar passages in the Revelation are expressed in fewer words than those in the book of Enoch. This seems to indicate that they have been transferred from the former book to the latter. The same remark is true, though not in an equal degree, of the other references to the New Testament.

On the other hand, large portions of the book are of such a character that it is difficult to understand how one who adopted the spirit of the New Testament could have written them.

One point will strike every student. Whatever opinion we may form of a writer who has published an apocalypse

under the name of Enoch, in which he has set forth his own views and opinions, the intentions of the author are uniformly on the side of holiness. With our standard of morality, it is difficult to conceive how a holy man could have set forth a body of visions, and ascribed them to Enoch, when he knew that they were only the offspring of his own imagination. But in the age when this book was composed, there was little sense that the practice was reprehensible. At any rate it was very common. St. Paul thought it quite probable that attempts would be made to forge epistles in his name, and took precautions to prevent the success of the attempt. The tone of this book is pre-eminently holy. But notwithstanding this, it is evident that its visions were seen by the author only, and not by the Patriarch, and as they are set forth under the name of Enoch, they must be assigned to the class of pious frauds.

But if it be obnoxious to this charge, it is one of the most pious of the class. It never seems to have occurred to the author that he was doing wrong. On the contrary, his aspirations after holiness are deep, his desires for close communion with God intense, and he represents the happiness of the future world as consisting in the most intimate communion with Him. On these points the book stands almost on a level with the Revelation. The morality of the book is pure, and will bear a favourable comparison with that of the Old Testament. Equally holy are the views which it presents of the Divine character. Its religion is spiritual, with scarcely a trace of Phariseeism, externalism, or casuistry. Those forms of moral and spiritual degeneracy, on account of which our Lord so vehemently denounced the hollow hypocrites of the day, are nowhere to be found in it. Compared with the general aspect of religion as it appears in the Apocrypha, it stands incomparably higher.

But if we suppose that the author was acquainted with the New Testament, and was animated in the composition of his work by feelings of mistaken piety, it is difficult to account for the omission of all reference to so large a portion of its contents as the work presents. Some of its most important doctrines are entirely ignored.

One omission cannot fail to strike the reader as very remarkable. We have noticed the close resemblance

between the conception and language of this book and that of the Revelation. This is pre-eminently the case in the Messianic portions. But numerous as are these likenesses, it is a singular fact that the book of Enoch does not present us with a single allusion to the Messiah in his priestly character, which forms the most prominent conception of him in the Revelation. Redemption by his blood is the great theme of this latter book, but on this the book of Enoch is totally silent. Although the Messiah is repeatedly described as the destroyer of sin and the restorer of creation, nowhere is this redemption traced, as it uniformly is in the Revelation, to the great sacrifice offered by him. He is designated as the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Son of Woman, but it contains no trace of him as the Lamb of God.

If the book of Enoch was written before the Advent, such an omission is quite consistent with its early date. The portraiture of the Messiah in the Revelation might then be considered as a further development of the Messianic conception. But if it be the work of a person well acquainted with the Revelation, the omission of this striking feature must have been the result of the deliberate intention of removing from it the priestly element in the conception of the Messiah.

On the other hand, no one can doubt that the author was well acquainted with the book of Daniel. His Messianic portraiture is based on the imagery of this book. But the book of Daniel contains, at least, an allusion to the priestly character and death of the Messiah. To this portion of Daniel's portraiture of the Messiah, the author of the book of Enoch makes not the smallest allusion. Although the entire omission of all reference to his priestly character as exhibited in the Revelation is a strong argument for its pre-Christian authorship, yet its force is greatly weakened by the absence of all reference to this aspect of his character as exhibited in Daniel, with which, as we have said, the author of the book of Enoch must have been familiar.

As the Messianic passages are far too long to quote in their entirety, we must adduce a few samples as an illustration of their character.

According to Archbishop Laurence's translation, the book contains more than one allusion to the doctrine of a Trinity.

But the accuracy of his translation of the most important passage has been denied.

According to the general representations of the book, Supreme Deity is certainly not assigned to the Messiah. This is strictly reserved for the "Lord of Spirits," the general designation of the Deity in the Messianic portions of the work. Divine attributes are not unfrequently ascribed to the Messiah, but not absolute Deity. In one passage he is classed among the worshippers of the Lord of Spirits.

It is uncertain whether the author viewed the Messiah as one of created Beings. However this may be, he is uniformly elevated on a pinnacle far higher than what we designate creation.

The title most frequently assigned to him is that of the Elect One. He is also repeatedly designated as the Son of God, the Son of Man, and once as the Son of Woman. He is presented to us in the capacity of King, and of the Judge of the world. The doctrine of his pre-existence is again and again asserted. He possesses righteousness, is gifted with wisdom, and knows all secret things. The Spirit in all his fulness is poured out on him; his kingdom is everlasting, and he stands highest in the acceptance of the Lord of Spirits. We shall subjoin a few quotations from Laurence.

"In that day shall the Elect One sit upon a throne of glory; (while their spirits within them shall be strengthened when they behold my Elect One) and shall choose them for those who have fled for protection to my holy and glorious name. In that day I will cause my Elect One to dwell in the midst of them; will change the face of heaven; will bless it, and illuminate it for ever. I will also change the face of the earth, will bless it, and cause those whom I have elected to dwell in it. But those who have committed sin and iniquity shall not inhabit it, for I have marked their proceedings. My righteous ones I will satisfy with peace, placing them before me."—(chap. xlv. 3.)

"This is the Son of man, to whom righteousness belongs, with whom righteousness has dwelt, and who will reveal all the treasures of that which is concealed, for the Lord of Spirits has chosen him, and his portion has surpassed all before the Lord of Spirits in everlasting righteousness."—(xlvi. 2.)

"In that day the prayer of the holy and righteous, and

the blood of the righteous, shall ascend from the earth into the presence of the Lord of Spirits.”—(xlvi. 1.)

“At that time I beheld the Ancient of days, while he sat on the throne of his glory, while the book of the living was opened in his presence, and while all the powers which were above the heavens stood around and before him.”—(xlvi. 3.)

“In that place I beheld a fountain of righteousness, which never failed, encircled by many springs of wisdom. Of these all the thirsty drank and were filled with wisdom, having their habitation with the righteous, the elect, and the holy.”—(xlviii. 1.)

“They have denied the Lord of Spirits and His Messiah.”—(xlviii. 11.)

“In those days the saints and the chosen shall undergo a change. The light of day shall rest upon them; and the splendour and glory of the saints shall be changed.”—(xlix. 1.)

“In those days shall the earth deliver up from her womb, and hell deliver up from hers, that which it has received; and destruction shall restore that which it owes. He shall select the righteous and holy from among them, for the day of their salvation has approached. And in those days shall the Elect One sit on his throne, while every secret of intellectual wisdom shall proceed from his mouth, for the Lord of Spirits has gifted and glorified him. . . . All the righteous shall become angels in heaven.”—(l. 1—4.)

Speaking of the world of Torment, the angel of peace says, “These are prepared for the hosts of Azazel, that they may be delivered over and adjudged to the lowest condemnation.”—(liii. 5.)

“There shall be light interminable, for darkness shall be previously destroyed.”—(lvi. 5.)

“In that hour was this Son of man invoked before the Lord of Spirits, and his name in the presence of the Ancient of days. Before the sun and the signs were created, before the stars of heaven were formed, his name was invoked in the presence of the Lord of Spirits. A support shall He be for the righteous and the holy, to lean upon without falling, and He shall be a light of nations. All that dwell on the earth shall fall down and worship before Him, shall bless and glorify Him.”—(xlviii. 2—4.)



"Iniquity passes away like a shadow, and possesses not a fixed station, for the Elect One stands before the Lord of Spirits, and His glory is for ever and ever, and His power from generation to generation. With Him dwells the spirit of intellectual wisdom, the spirit of instruction and of power, and the spirit of those who sleep in righteousness. He shall judge secret things."—(xlvi. (b.) 2, 3.)

"O ye kings, O ye mighty who inhabit the earth, you shall behold my Elect One, sitting on the throne of my glory. And He shall judge Azazeel, all his associates, and all his hosts, in the name of the Lord of Spirits."—(liv. 5.)

"Then the Lord of Spirits seated on the throne of his glory the Elect One, who shall judge all the works of the holy in heaven above, and in a balance shall He weigh their actions."—(lx. 10, 11.)

"Trouble shall come upon them as upon a woman in travail. . . . Trouble shall seize them when they shall behold this Son of woman sitting on the throne of his glory."—(lxi. 7, 9.)

"From the beginning the Son of man existed in secret."—(lxi. 10.)

"They shall fix their hopes on the Son of man; shall pray to Him and petition Him for mercy. Then shall the Lord of Spirits hasten to expel them from his presence."—(lxi. 13, 14.)

"And with this Son of man shall they dwell, eat, lie down, and rise up, for ever and ever."—(lxi. 17.)

"Afterwards their countenances shall be filled with darkness and confusion before the Son of man, from whose presence they shall be expelled."—(lxii. 15.)

"He sat upon the throne of his glory, and the principal part of the judgment was assigned to Him, the Son of man. Sinners shall disappear and perish from the face of the earth, while those who seduced them shall be bound with chains for ever."—(lxviii. 39.)

Several of these extracts bear a very close resemblance to passages in the New Testament. We have by no means adduced the whole of those which are closely connected with one another in thought and expression. The resemblance is so great that it is next to impossible that it can be the result of chance. If we found such a resemblance between two books in any other department of

literature, we should draw the inference that one of them was closely connected with the other. The conclusion seems inevitable that either the writers of the New Testament have borrowed various expressions from the book of Enoch, or the author of the latter from them.

In the book of Enoch the similarities of conception and expression are in a more diffuse form than the corresponding expressions in the New Testament, which are uniformly more concise and pointed. So far the passages of the New Testament have the fairest claim to be regarded as the originals, and those in Enoch as the copies.

The Messianic passages are not merely expansions of ideas in the Old Testament. They go far beyond them in clearness and precision. Although Enoch does not assign absolute Deity to the Messiah, yet he is elevated in this book to such a height of exaltation, that it may be said to invest him with a Divine character. It is no less clear that the author contemplated him as human likewise. He is accordingly again and again placed before us as the Son of God and the Son of Man.

But such a clear conception of him in the Old Testament is wholly wanting. The conception that he was to be the Son of Man is borrowed from Daniel. But we nowhere find him in the Old Testament directly designated as the Son of God. In the passage in the Psalms this title forms no direct designation of the Messiah. It can only be applied to him typically and inferentially. This book, in distinctly designating the Messiah as the Son of God and the Son of Man, presents us with a development in the conception of his person beyond anything to be found in the Old Testament.

No less remarkable are the other declarations respecting him. The Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament are all more or less typical. They are directly asserted of some lower conception or person, and it is only in their highest sense that they are applicable to the Messiah. Of the immediate subject of their utterance they were only partially true. In the conception of the Messiah they received their fulfilment. But in the book of Enoch their sole reference is to the Messiah, and to no other. Hence they have a distinctness and directness to which the prophecies of the Old Testament are strangers. It may be doubtful

whether the Psalmist spoke of David or of Christ, but the predictions in Enoch bear no doubtful reference; they are applicable to one person, and to one person only, namely, the Messiah.

They also define his character and offices with singular precision. He is expressly asserted to be the Judge of the world, an assertion which is nowhere directly made of the Messiah in the Old Testament. On this point the author is nearly as distinct as the New Testament itself. He describes the Lord of Spirits as committing all judgment to him. The principal part of the judgment is directly assigned to the Son of Man. This is not a mere expansion of the Messianic conceptions of the Old Testament, but a clear addition to them.

The doctrine of the pre-existence of the Messiah is placed before us with little less distinctness than in the pages of St. John or St. Paul. He may not be invested with the highest attributes of Deity, but his existence before the Universe is positively stated. This also is a great advance on the delineations of the Old Testament. In them the Messiah is typically portrayed with the attributes of the Mighty God; but the force of such a delineation is greatly weakened by its being assigned in the first instance to a being who is obviously human. At other times he is drawn as purely human. But nowhere is his pre-existence affirmed with the same clearness and precision as it is in this book, nor is he directly presented to us at the same time as divine and human.

But in the attributes with which the Son of Man is invested we do not trace any great progression compared with the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament. They are evidently borrowed from Isaiah, although somewhat less full than the delineations of the prophet.

If the Messianic passages of this book are of a pre-Christian date, it is evident that they must be either direct predictions of a higher order than those in the Old Testament Scriptures, or else they point out the developments through which the Messianic conceptions had passed in the centuries immediately succeeding the termination of the prophetic period.

If we adopt the former alternative, we are involved in the difficulty of finding them in a book, which, however pious its author may have been, is evidently a forgery.

The prophetic spirit must have been in active energy long after the period when the Jews considered that it had ceased; a decision which is borne out by all the evidence which we possess. In addition to this, its Messianic prophecies are never once referred to by our Lord or his apostles, although it would have been much more to their purpose to have cited these, if they had regarded them as divine, than many of the passages they have quoted from the Old Testament.

But if we adopt the second alternative, we are met by the difficulty of supposing that a highly spiritual conception of the Messiah, and a highly spiritual tone of religious feeling, grew up in the midst of a carnal age. Such are some of the difficulties of the position.

It also cannot be denied that this book in its present, or in some previously existing form, is quoted in the Epistle of Jude. The passage in Jude, although not word for word, is as close a citation of it as most of the quotations of the Old Testament in the New, and closer than many of those of the Fathers from the New Testament which are adduced to prove that those who made them were acquainted with the apostolical writings. In addition to this, the resemblance between other passages in the book and some in the second Epistle of Peter, and in that of Jude, are very striking, so that it is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that they must have had a common origin.

The quotation in Jude proves that the author of the epistle was acquainted with a book of Enoch. The idea of the angels who left their first estate is also identical in both. But this only proves that a book was in the hands of the author of Jude's epistle which contained portions of our present book of Enoch. It is no evidence that a book referred to by St. Jude contained the Messianic portions of the present work. If the whole of our present book was in the hands of the apostles, and highly esteemed by them, it is utterly unaccountable that its Messianic predictions should have been passed over by them in silence, and that it should have been only referred to in this solitary instance, in proof that a divine judgment would finally overtake the ungodly.

In one word, if the authors of the New Testament esteemed the book of Enoch as they esteemed the Old Testament, why did they not cite it, when it would have

served their purpose better than many of the citations which they have made from the Old Testament? It seems to us impossible, in the absence of any citation, that they could have esteemed it a divine book; if they did, the Messianic portions must be subsequent additions.

On the other hand, the general tone of the book runs counter to what we know was the course of religious development in the times preceding the Advent. The spirituality of the Prophets and the Psalmists was gradually passing away. Of this the books in the canon composed subsequent to the Captivity afford unequivocal testimony. Still stronger is the evidence supplied by the apocryphal books. It was during this period that the foundations were laid of that Judaism which we meet with in the pages of the New Testament. The Messianic conception gradually hardened itself into that of a conquering and temporal Messiah, the exclusive property of the circumcised Jew. We know for certain that this was the conception which took distinct form during the century which followed the birth of our Lord. The conceptions of the Messiah gradually grew more temporal, carnal, and exclusive, until they terminated in a Bar-Chocobas. If such is the case when we can test them by the light of authentic history, it seems utterly incredible that in the century and half preceding the Advent they could have been developing in the Messiah of the book of Enoch. If such was the case we are entitled to ask how, when, and where did the grosser Messianic conceptions originate?

The Gospels may be safely referred to in proof of the state of opinion current among the Jews during the period of our Lord's life. Now, although the examples of Simeon and Anna prove the existence at the time of the Advent, in certain minds, of an Old Testament tone of thought, yet there is nothing to show that even in such minds the Messianic conception had undergone any additional development. With the general mass of the people, instead of developing, it had retrograded.

The Songs of the Virgin, Simeon, and of Zechariah, prove that the leading idea of the Messiah was that he was to be the Son of David. While he was to be a light to the Gentiles, he was to be the special Messiah of the Israelite. This formed the highest conception of him in the minds of



pious Jews. But by this designation he is not once referred to in the book of Enoch. The views of its author are larger. He reverts to the more catholic conception of him as the Son of Man.

According to the Gospels the conception of the Messiah as the Son of Man had faded from the popular expectation. This title is constantly applied by our Lord to himself, but it is never applied to him by others, even by those who believed in his Messiahship. This is the more remarkable, because it is the unquestionable designation of the Messiah in the book of Daniel. But in our Lord's days, the narrower conception of the Son of David had swallowed up the idea that the Messiah was to be the ideal of humanity.

Still less was the Messiah expected under the designation of the Son of God. It is described as Peter's particular glory that he confessed our Lord as Messiah under this character, and our Lord is represented as directly asserting that flesh and blood had not revealed this truth to him, but his Father who was in heaven. It seems impossible that the Evangelists could have ascribed such words to Christ if he had been generally expected, or if there had been any clear prediction of him under that title. If our Lord or his Apostles had been acquainted with the book of Enoch, it is next to impossible that the Evangelists should have represented our Lord as asserting that the confession of Peter, that he was the Son of the living God, was not a discovery made to him by flesh and blood, but that it was a special revelation imparted by his Father in heaven. It is the frequent designation of the Messiah in this book.

Although the author has made no clear statement of his belief in an incarnation, yet he evidently contemplated the Messiah as uniting in the same person the two-fold character of the Son of God and the Son of Man. We are nowhere told how or when the Son of God became the Son of Man, but the union of these characters in the person of the Messiah is most distinct. Not only does such a conception of him transcend the Old Testament portraiture of him, but the Gospels afford a distinct testimony that such were not the general conceptions of the Messiah at the period of the Advent. It is impossible to read the Synoptic Gospels and not to see that such an expectation was not only not the popular one, but not even that of the more advanced

Israelite. The direct assertions in the Gospel of St. John respecting the divine character of our Lord's person, are the very reasons why the opponents of the historical character of the Evangelists labour to defer its publication to the first half of the second century. According to the Gospels nothing gave greater offence than our Lord's claims of superhuman dignity, even among those who were not indisposed to admit that he might be the Messiah. But it is utterly impossible that any reader of the book of Enoch, who assigned authority to it, could have been ignorant that the Messiah was to combine the characters of the Son of God and the Son of Man.

It has been asserted that our Lord's original conception of himself was that of a human Messiah, and that if the divine characteristics of the Christ of the Gospels were ever assumed by himself, and were not the pure invention of his followers, they were a subsequent development on his part, modelled on the Messianic delineations of this book. The above considerations, however, are conclusive against this view, for although the book of Enoch designates its Messiah as "the Son of Man," and "the Son of Woman," in the Messianic passages he is uniformly delineated in his superhuman, and never once in his human character. It follows therefore that no amount of meditation on this book could have suggested to our Lord that harmonious interweaving of the divine and the human in a single personality which forms the essence of the conception of the Christ of the Gospels; for not only is there no blending of these aspects of character in the Messiah of this book, but the human ones are entirely wanting. In fact, if our Lord's original conception of himself was that of a mere man, the suggestion that at some subsequent period of his career he appropriated to himself the divine aspects of the Messiah of this book involves the assumption that he must have been either demented, or a conscious impostor; for no one in the possession of the sound understanding which is a characteristic of the Christ of the Gospels could have succeeded in deluding himself into the belief that he possessed the superhuman attributes of the Enochian Messiah.

Another peculiar trait of this book, which places it greatly in advance of the conceptions current at the time of

our Lord's ministry is, that it represents the Messiah as in his person the Revealer of the Lord of Spirits. His perfections are transfused in the Messiah's person. This is unquestionably the idea of the Gospel of St. John, and of the Johannean and Pauline epistles. But those who deny the divine origin of the Gospels unanimously maintain that it is a later development of Christianity, and forms no portion of its original form as developed in the Synoptics. If such is the case the book of Enoch must belong to a later development of Christian doctrine than the times and the preaching of Jesus.

Although our Lord declares himself to be the revealer of the perfections of his Father in his own human person, it was not the idea entertained at the time of the Messiah. Our Lord's declarations on this subject were not only entirely strange to the apostles, but they were wholly unable to grasp them.

If the book existed in its present form prior to the Christian era, its Messianic passages are more important as predictions than anything to be found in the Old Testament. But while our Lord and his apostles were habitually in the habit of referring to the Old Testament, as bearing witness to his Messiahship, they never have once referred to this book for this purpose. Even if they had viewed it as not possessing the authority of Canonical Scripture, which, if the Messianic passages are real predictions, is difficult to imagine, still this would not have hindered them from referring to the book as far as it contained statements of truth, as is found by the reference to it in the epistle of Jude. The most obvious explanation of their not having quoted it is, that they were ignorant of its Messianic predictions. The total want of reference to it is subversive of the idea that they used and felt a deep reverence for it.

On the other hand, the absence of several most important Christian elements from the work is unquestionably surprising, if we consider that a person well acquainted with the Christian Scriptures was the author of the book in its present form. We cannot see from its general aspect or tendency, why he should have ignored the whole of the New Testament teaching as to the humiliation and death of the Messiah. On the contrary, it would appear to be a decided improvement on the work if these conceptions

had found a place in it. But it is evident that if the author was acquainted with the Christian Scriptures, he must have deliberately determined to exclude that representation of the Messiah's person. The similar omission of that in Daniel qualifies the force of this reasoning.

The evidence, therefore, of which we are in possession does not enable us to arrive at a certain conclusion respecting the date or the character of this book. Whether we assume that it was composed in its present form before or after the Christian era, we are met by considerable difficulties on either side. The assumption that large portions of the work are pre-Christian, and that its Messianic portions have been added by one acquainted with Christianity is not altogether free from objections. We must, therefore, examine how far, on the supposition that it is pre-Christian, this book could have aided the authors of the Gospels in the portraiture of their Christ, and what is the interval which separates the Messiah of Enoch from the Jesus of the Gospels.

It will at once strike the reader that the book of Enoch presents us with no portraiture of the person of the Messiah, but only a body of dogmatic statements respecting him. As such it is a most striking contrast to our Gospels. In these, at least in the Synoptics, the dogmatic statements are comparatively few, but the same divine man is depicted in every variety of aspect, duly varied in the exhibitions of his character according to the exigencies of the occasion. The dogmatic statements of what he was or ought to have been are few, but the exhibition of what he actually was, is complete. Of this delineation, the book of Enoch is wholly void. The difference between this book and the Gospels may be best expressed by saying, that the book of Enoch declares what the Messiah ought to have been according to the ideas of the author; the Gospels set before us a delineation of what, contrary to the expectations of those who wrote them, he actually was.

This involves a profound interval of separation between the two works. The book of Enoch declares that he was to be Son of God and Son of Man. It assigns to him an everlasting kingdom, and proclaims him the future Judge of the world. It declares that holiness and other divine perfections appertain to him. But while the Synoptic

Gospels make few dogmatical assertions, they present us with the actual portraiture of a living Christ, exhibiting in his person in perfect unison the holiness of God and man.

The dogmatic statements of the book of Enoch present us with a kind of analogy to several of those contained in the Epistles. Both, for example, assert the pre-existence of the Messiah; both proclaim his glorious exaltation, and his Lordship. But here the resemblance ends. All the declarations respecting him in the Epistles pre-suppose, and are founded on, the reality of his human manifestation as it is recorded in the Gospels. Without the assumption that those to whom they were addressed were well acquainted with our Lord's human life, they are devoid of meaning. The exhibition of the Divine in that human life is made the groundwork of all religious and moral obligation. The book of Enoch, however, presents us with certain dogmatic statements respecting the Messiah's person, and nothing more.

This difference of character between the two books is best exhibited by a brief consideration of the point where they most closely approximate in their respective descriptions of the glories and felicity of the saints in the future world. Here both are alike dogmatic. They declare in general terms what future glory shall be, but neither the one nor the other gives us an actual portraiture of its character. The reason of this is obvious. Both are at an equal disadvantage in having to depict the future. Respecting it, it is possible to give nothing but dogmatic statements. But in the Messianic delineations of the two books, the difference between them is as great as between that mental power which is able to propound a problem for solution, and that which presents us with the solution itself. It was a thing comparatively easy to say, propound a harmonious solution of the phenomena of the heavens, worthy of their great Author. It was a very different thing to hand in as that solution the Principia of Newton.

The book of Enoch only presents us with a partial exhibition of the problem, the solution of which is given us in the pages of the Evangelists.

The Evangelists might have learnt from it the idea that the Messiah was to be divine and human. They might have gathered from the title so frequently given to him of



the Son of Man, that he ought to embody in his character an idealized conception of humanity. But Enoch would have afforded them little or no aid as to how that conception ought to be realized in fact, or what were the attributes in which it should be exhibited. It could have supplied them with the bare conception that they ought to delineate a being humanly perfect, but it could have given them no idea how they ought to realize that perfection.

They might also have gathered from the title so frequently given to him of the Son of God, that this perfect delineation of humanity was also in some sense to be exhibited as divine. As the same person is named Son of God and Son of Man, they could further have drawn the conclusion, that the divine and human elements of the character of the Messiah were to be exhibited in the same person. But while the book of Enoch intimates that the Messiah was to be in some sense divine, of the precise nature of his divine character it would have left them perfectly ignorant, as well as of the extent in which it was to be a manifestation of the Godhead. The authors of the Gospels, if they had derived their conceptions from this book, would have found the Messiah invested with only a subordinate divinity, and all the attributes of supreme Deity restricted to the Lord of Spirits. If, however, they had derived from this book the idea of combining the divine and human in one person, they would have been left without the smallest hint how the union was to be effected, or in what proportions divine and human attributes were to be blended together. The book of Enoch is wholly devoid of a single attempt to present us with the union of the portraiture of the divine and human in a single personality. It does not furnish us with a single trait of the picture of the meek, holy, humble, unselfish, suffering Jesus, willingly surrendering himself to the fulfilment of his Father's will. Nowhere is the perfection of humanity exhibited in union with the consciousness of Deity.

The authors of the Gospels might have learnt the bare fact that the Messiah was to be the revelation of the Lord of Spirits. But the author of Enoch nowhere makes the attempt to portray such a revelation in his person, nor does he furnish a single hint how such a revelation was to be accomplished. In this respect the difference is as wide

as between an order to paint a picture of a particular character and its actual performance.

But the most important feature of the conception of the Messiah of the Gospels is entirely wanting in the book of Enoch, viz., his character as a sufferer. To whatever cause we may assign the absence of this conception of him, the fact is beyond dispute. This alone places a profound gulph between the conception of him as entertained by this writer, and that of the Jesus of the Gospels. In other respects the book of Enoch supplies us with some of the conditions of the problem to be solved, but fails to present us with the solution. Here the problem and the solution are alike wanting. But the divine yet suffering Jesus is the most essential portion of the portraiture of the Gospel Christ. Without this they would present us with a different Christ. A large portion of the idea of the Evangelical Jesus is most closely allied to this feature in his character.

As a consequence the book of Enoch entirely passes over the central conception of the Messiah of the Gospels, his death and resurrection. Of the spotless exhibition of his disinterested love, or of his life and death of sacrifice, this book does not present us with either hint or vestige. No less complete is the absence of any conception of the Messiah as the great spiritual motivity which was to breathe a new life into dead and corrupt humanity. He is declared to be Lord, but in virtue of what claim does not appear. Nowhere is he exhibited as the great motive of morality, or the centre of life around which man's moral and spiritual nature turns. Of the Messiah as the lawgiver of his kingdom, at once by his life and death the measure and the motive of obedience, this book affords us not a hint. The morality of the Gospel is wanting in it.

We likewise miss in the book of Enoch the whole of that wonderful apparatus by means of which the Jesus of the Gospels presents spiritual truth to the minds of men. Our Lord not only exhibited it in his own person, but has shown the most perfect command over all the imagery of external nature and social life, to make them a suitable vehicle for its communication. He uses them for this purpose and for no other. But the author of the book of Enoch not only has failed to accomplish this, but has embodied as a portion of his apocalypse a

system of nature which is entirely untrue. Had the authors of the Gospels attempted to imitate him here, the consequences would have been fatal to them.

If we admit the truth of the view, that the book of Enoch was composed prior to the Christian era, we cannot fail to be surprised at the advance which its conceptions of the Messiah present. Still, if the authors of the Gospels had been familiar with it, it would have afforded them but small assistance in the creation of the delineation of their Jesus. The interval between the Messiah of this book and the Jesus of the Gospels is not less than that which separates the roughest sketch from the most finished picture.

But the book of Enoch has another very important bearing on our argument. We will suppose that it is pre-Christian, even in its Messianic portions. The author, therefore, must have had distinctly before him the bare outline of several of the most important points of the character of the Messiah. Why has he left it as a bare outline? Why has he not filled it up with a full delineation as it is exhibited in the pages of the Evangelists? Why does he not at any rate make some approximation towards it? Why has he not given us a portraiture of the Messiah dramatised in all the aspects of holiness and benevolence, and invested with the perfect ideal of morality? The reason is plain. The interval which separates the delineations of this book from what has been accomplished by the Evangelists is immense. He has, therefore, made no attempt to bridge it over. Nothing can give us stronger evidence of the impotence of the mythic theory to account for the existence of the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists, than the assumption that the Messianic portions of this book were composed prior to the advent of Christianity. Its author only went so far as to realize several of the conditions on which a Gospel ought to be based; but he entirely failed to create even an approximation to one of them.

It will not be necessary to give any large consideration to the fourth book of Esdras. The utmost uncertainty exists respecting its date, but the predominance of evidence is in favour of its post-Christian origin. A few passages in it are unquestionable interpolations in the interest of

Christianity, but the general aspect of the book strongly implies that it was written by a Jew. The book presents us with some elements of Messianic doctrine, not widely differing from those of the book of Enoch, from which, however, it is strongly distinguished by the melancholy tone which pervades it. Under the influence of this it recognizes the death of the Messiah, but equally with the other book it is devoid of the idea of his sacrifice. Its Messiah is one pre-eminently Jewish. With the exception of the fact that the Messiah was to die and the world to return to chaos before the resurrection, it furnishes us with no fresh element of Messianic thought.

The evident post-Christian origin of portions of this book renders it useless as an element out of which the Gospels could have originated. If, however, we suppose that though the work itself is post-Christian, the ideas contained in it may have been in circulation either before or at the time of the Advent, it would have afforded the original mythologists no aid in dramatising the character of the Jesus of the Gospels. Its anti-Jewish passages are unquestionably interpolations, and when these are removed the genuine work is of the most Jewish character of extreme exclusiveness. In these respects it is a great retrogression in the tone of the prophets and the book of Enoch, and had the line of thought involved in it entered into the Gospels, the Messiah which they have portrayed would have been depicted not with the catholic character of the Son of Man, nor even with that of a Son of Abraham, but with that of a Jew, who was the destroyer of the Gentiles.

There are passages, however, which suggest the idea that images derived from our Lord's prophecy of the end, and from the book of Revelation were not unknown to the author. So great is the difference in the whole character of thought between this book and the Gospels, that it is not possible to assign these resemblances to a common substratum of thought out of which both alike grew. The feelings at the bottom of this apocalypse could never have diverged into those presented to us by the Gospels.

The other apocryphal books contain no allusions to Messianic expectations.

But whatever may have been the views entertained by

a small body of persons near the time of the Advent, respecting the person of the Messiah, the testimony of history proves that a Messiah of a very different character from that which we have been considering was becoming the cherished expectation of the Jewish people. The Gospels enable us to form a distinct idea of the conception of his character which animated the popular mind during our Lord's ministry. History shows us that in the course of far less than a century from the Advent, that idea took full possession of the mind of the Jewish people. The nature of the conception itself, and the power with which it operated is shown in the character of the Jewish war of liberation, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, and in its actual embodiment, several years later, in a personal Messiah in the pretender Bar-Chocobas, which ended still more disastrously for the Jewish race.

The character of this pretender may be considered as the result of a century of development of the Jewish mind, in working out the conception of the Messiah which was current in our Lord's days. He was the full realization of the preceding course of Jewish thought. He was proclaimed Messiah by Akiba, the most eminent Rabbi of his day, accepted in that character by the people, and led them during their last great contest with Rome. In him, therefore, we have the embodiment of the final stage of Jewish Messianic thought. The same ideas were working among the great body of the people during the first war of liberation, showing both the nature of the conception and the direction in which it was tending. At and prior to that period many pretenders of a similar character appeared, but the whole state of feeling did not then seek expression in the creation of a personal Messiah, though the same feelings and impulses were at work. At last the Jewish expectation, which had been fermenting in the breast of the nation for upwards of a century, found its expression in an embodied reality. That reality was Bar-Chocobas, the Son of a Star, whom the Jews afterwards, in their despair, designated the Son of a Lie.

We cannot better describe this Jewish final idealization of the Messianic character than by saying that it presents an embodiment of character the precise opposite of the Jesus of the Gospels. Whatever Jesus Christ was not,



this pretender was. Whatever this pretender was, Jesus Christ was not. He was a temporal King, a worker of miracles no better than vulgar impositions, an embodiment of the darker aspects of human nature, a fierce destroyer. His kingdom was one essentially of this world. His character embodied neither holiness, benevolence, nor justice. Jesus offered himself unresistingly to death. The impostor died in arms.

But according to the unequivocal testimony of the Gospels such a Messianic conception was gradually getting a firm hold on the Jewish mind, nearly a century earlier, during the ministry of our Lord. Josephus confirms that testimony. His whole history of that period shows that these feelings were at work, and deeply leavening the nation. Our Lord professed himself to be the Messiah. But the character in which he exhibited himself as such did not suit the aspirations of the people. They rejected him because he was not a Messiah such as they desired.

The seeds of such a Messianic character as Bar-Chocobas were fully laid at the period of our Lord's ministry in the minds of the Jewish people. They had the fullest expectation of a Messiah, but he was not to be a spiritual one. The leading conception of him was that of a King armed with superhuman power, who was to free them from the Roman yoke, and exalt them to supremacy over the nations. During this period, it is true, higher and better notions of him had not died out; but such a Messiah was the subject of popular desire, and his refusal to assume that character was the reason why the nation rejected and crucified Jesus of Nazareth.

The popular conceptions of the Messiah as they are portrayed in the Gospels, and the final embodiment of these conceptions in Bar-Chocobas, present us with the result of the development which the Messianic idea underwent during a century of progress. With these conceptions we are all familiar. The interval which separates the two is one of no great breadth. The Jews of our Lord's day would perhaps not have received Bar-Chocobas as their Messiah. They would have required that he should have borne somewhat more of the aspect of holiness. But they would have received one true to many of his

great outlines, a temporal king and conqueror, a destroyer of the nations, who was exclusively a Jew.

The facility of a rapidly deteriorated Messianic development during this interval was greatly increased by the absorption of the holier spirits of the Jewish nation into the Christian Church.

Such being the nature of popular Messianism, as it is depicted in the Gospels, and such being the firm hold which it had acquired on the minds of the Jewish people, it is evident that a considerable period must have elapsed from its first development before it could have grown up into its latter form. If the amount of development which we have just considered be taken as a measure of growth, the popular Messianic conception must have taken two or three centuries in its formation.

The origin of such a notion of Messiahship is not difficult to trace. It was the natural result of the historical circumstances of the people, reacting on the conceptions of the prophets.

The prophets had promised to the Jews a bright spiritual future under the imagery of a temporal kingdom. But in the period between the Captivity and the Advent no such state of prosperity, whether taken in a spiritual or a temporal sense, was the lot of the Jewish nation. During the whole of that interval, with the exception of a short space of time, they were held in subjection by foreign conquerors; and still worse, the strongest attempts were made to subvert the national faith by the introduction of foreign manners. A determined struggle set the Jew, for a short time, free from his foreign lord. But even during this period, both his national existence and his faith were threatened with dangers from without; and the glories of the theocracy were gradually darkening from within. In such a state of things the Jewish patriot would naturally cast his eye on the Old Testament predictions, and take refuge from his present national degradation in the hopes of a future deliverer therein contained. The circumstances of the times induced him to take the expressions of the prophets in their most material sense. His present oppressions seemed the greatest of evils. Surely the first duty of the coming deliverer must be to break from off his neck the yoke of the nations. Hence the Jewish patriot

would gradually picture to himself the Messiah as a temporal deliverer. As the times became of increasing darkness, his Messiah would assume less of the spiritual, and more of the temporal aspect, until, under the influence of a gradually decreasing spirituality in religion, he would hasten into those conceptions of the Messiah which ultimately led to our Lord's rejection by the Jews.

It is evident, therefore, that unless the entire groundwork of the Gospels, and the testimony of history nearly contemporaneous, are fallacious, there had been long setting in in the Jewish mind a development of Messianic thought of a character entirely opposite to that presented to us in the Jesus of the Evangelists. At the time of our Lord, it was the predominant Messianic conception. If, therefore, the Jesus of the Gospels be a mythic creation, those who developed it must have succeeded in their attempt, notwithstanding the fact that the general tendency of Messianic thought was in an opposite direction, and was urged forward by the strongest impulses. Two opposite poles of Jewish Messianic development must have sprung up, the one which produced the ideal Jesus of the Gospels, the other which generated an actual Bar-Chocbas.

But we are not dependent on reasonings from analogy or the simple testimony of the Gospels for the knowledge of the existence of such a Messianic development. The knowledge of it had spread into the heathen world. We have also authentic testimony as to the nature of other developments of the Jewish mind at this period. They are all closely allied to such a conception of the Messiah. During this interval, those principles of Judaism took root and flourished, which extinguished the spirituality of the prophetic period, substituting externalism for inward religion, and finally hardening themselves into the unbearable yoke of Rabbinism.

Such are the Messianic conceptions out of which the inventors of the Gospel myths must have elaborated the Jesus of the Evangelists, if that portraiture is an ideal and not an historical one. The supporters of the mythic theory are certainly not entitled to the advantage of the Messianic conceptions of the book of Enoch. In the midst of the difficulties with which the determination of its actual

date is encircled, they have no right to assume that it was in the hands of Christ and the apostles, and on the strength of this assumption to construct their theory. But as the evidence that its Messianic portions are of a post-Christian date is not absolutely conclusive, we are ready to concede to them any advantage which they can derive from the supposed existence of this book in the time of the historical Jesus, or any influence which it may have exerted on the formation of his character, or any aid it might have rendered the mythologists in their subsequent additions to it. We ourselves are of opinion that the weight of the evidence against its pre-Christian date greatly preponderates, but we wish not to erect an argument on any questionable foundation. We will therefore make our opponents a present of this book, for the purpose of aiding the mythologists in the elaboration of their conception of the Christ.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DEVELOPMENTS OF JUDAISM BETWEEN THE TERMINATION OF THE PROPHETICAL PERIOD AND THE ADVENT.

It will be necessary to examine the nature of this last phasis of Judaism, because it constitutes the religious atmosphere in the midst of which Christianity originated. We have already sufficiently analysed the various Messianic conceptions which, if the Gospels are unhistorical, may have aided the fabricators of myths in elaborating the portraiture of their Jesus. It remains for us to determine the nature of the other influences, moral and religious, in the midst of which the conception must have grown, and out of which it must have originated.

In considering this subject, one point to which we have already alluded, requires our deepest attention. The testimony of history shows that the developments of man do not always advance in a uniform line of progress. They are not unfrequently retrograde. It may be perfectly true that man on the whole has advanced through the long

period of history; but this does not invalidate the other truth. He has advanced and then retrograded, and then again started on a fresh period of improvement. The whole history of religion, art, civilization, philosophy, and political society, bears witness that this is the law of his progress.

Different systems of thought have developed themselves up to a certain point, after which they have continued to flourish, and then gradually declined. The whole course of ancient philosophy is an example of this. Before fresh progress has been possible, a new impulse required to be breathed into the mind. The old gradually expires, and out of it the new is slowly created. This law has been deeply impressed on all the religious developments of our race. It has strongly marked those of Judaism; they have not been all uniformly progressive. In many points during this period its movements were retrograde, compared with the times of the Psalmists and the Prophets. In the midst of these Christianity originated, and with them she had to struggle for existence.

Of the existence of retrograde movements in religious thoughts our opponents are indisposed to take sufficient account. It is a great historic truth that no religion has ever existed which has not been subject to them. As the time at their command for the elaboration of the Gospels is short, it is highly important, in order to impart to their theory even an appearance of probability, that every religious movement in connection with this subject should be always in the right direction. Nothing can be more inconvenient for them than to have to encounter opposite tendencies of thought.

Although some of the movements which took place during this period were in the direction of Christianity, others were of a contrary character. For a considerable time anterior to the Advent these latter were developing themselves with considerable force. With the termination of the long line of the Prophets the highest forms of Judaism gradually disappear. From this time it ceases to be creative. In place of that lofty spiritual element which has made the writings of the Prophets and the Psalmists an unique phenomenon in history, arose a spirit of formalism, casuistry, and above all, of intense nationality, which



in the eyes of the Pagan formed the most singular characteristic of the Jew.

The first indications of this change may be traced in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The history of its growth is that of the Jewish sects. As the most distinguishing feature of the former period was the presence of the Psalmist and the Prophet, so that of the latter is the predominance of the Scribe. The teacher from henceforth became the commentator, and he converted religion into law. Greek philosophy underwent a similar retrogression. The period of living thought was followed by a long night of stagnation, during which the critic reigned supreme. The period of creative genius was followed by one of mere erudition. But the fate of Judaism was different. By means of a Divine power, as Christians believe, or by that of a human one, as our opponents assert, Christianity grew out of the one; the womb of the other continued barren, until the Gospel and a new civilization breathed into it the elements of life, or to speak more correctly, incorporated it into their own being.

One of the most important developments of Judaism during this period in the direction of Christianity, was the uprooting of its idolatrous tendencies, the establishment of pure monotheism as the religion of the people, and the diffusion of it throughout the world by Jewish instrumentality.

The Babylonish Captivity placed a gulph between the Jew and the idolatrous tendencies by which he was surrounded. Henceforth he appears in history as a rigid monotheist, to whom idolatry was an abomination. Of the doctrine of the Divine Unity, the Jew both nationally and individually was the preacher to the nations. His theology left no place for the hosts of intermediate beings, the offspring of the imagination in which alone they existed. The series of subsequent events, while retaining the nucleus of the nation in their settled home, had led to a wide dispersion of the race both in the Eastern and Western worlds. Wherever the Jew was settled, he carried his religion with him.

It is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of this as a preparation for the preaching of the Gospel. Wherever its missionaries appeared, they found scarcely a city of any size in the Roman empire in which a congre-

gation of Jews had not been settled for a considerable time. The very peculiarities of the race had called attention to the religion which had originated them. Nor had the success of the Jew been small. All the evidence of history shows that he had made a deep impression on the public mind. He had made numerous converts ; but his influence extended far beyond the number of those who actually embraced his religion.

Wherever Judaism had been domiciled for a considerable time the Apostles found a large number of religious men who, while they had not adopted the peculiarities of Judaism, were believers in its fundamental truths. These possessed a more liberal cast of mind than the Jew proper, and united the nobler aspects of both Judaism and Gentileism. Among them the Apostles found a numerous body of men prepared for the reception of Christianity. A majority of the members of the early churches were either Jews or persons of this description. They enabled Christianity to take root in a congenial soil before heathenism proper was engrafted into the Church. Had it been otherwise, there would have been no little risk of the introduction of a pagan element.

The Jew, during this period, had increased in the ardour of his faith. He had shown himself able not only to fight but to die for it. His zeal was too often obscured by his exclusiveness ; but there was something sublime in the manner in which he clung to his faith amidst the scoffs of the world. In an age of general infidelity, he bore testimony to a belief in the reality of the Invisible. He was often misunderstood, but he never failed to impress, and beyond doubt to strike a chord in the human mind.

During this interval of time the doctrine of the immortality of man, and a belief in a future state of retribution, had become more completely developed. The apocryphal books supply us with distinct traces of its growth. The events of Providence had taught the Jew that this world was not the theatre of God's perfect moral government, even under a theocracy. In proportion as the conviction that vice was punished and virtue rewarded in this life became more and more obscured, the doctrine of a righteous retribution beyond the grave unfolded itself.

As early as the times of the Maccabees the doctrine of the immortality of the soul had become a powerful principle, capable of supporting the martyr in his hour of torture. Great must have been the change which had taken place in thought between Hezekiah, who on his sick bed pronounced this world to be the only land of light, and the seven brethren and their mother, to whom death opened the gates of immortality. If we can judge from the allusions in the Gospels, the belief in it must have been widely extended. As the Jew believed in God as the moral Governor of the Universe, it proportionably extended his conceptions of the responsibility of man.

Near the conclusion of this period was developed a doctrine of the Logos. It was the result of the fusion of Jewish and Gentile thought at Alexandria. As our Lord has nowhere ascribed this conception to himself, it may be considered more properly to belong to the regions of theology than to the subject which we are considering. But its adoption in St. John's Gospel must be considered as an admission that the previous speculations on the Divine nature, obscured as they were by much which was unreal, were not wholly devoid of a foundation in truth. As far as they contained truth, our Lord's divine character was the perfect realization of them. In the same manner as he realized and filled up to their full idea the imperfect representations of what was typical in Judaism, as likewise he filled up to the full the complete ideal of its imperfect moral teaching, so he was the substance and fulfilment of the shadowy truth which had been brought to light by imperfect human speculation.

Philosophy had mainly contributed to the formation of the conception. It had endeavoured with imperfect success to interpose something between the infinite God and the finite creature. From this effort of the mind originated the multifarious conceptions of the Logos, varying between an impersonation of the divine wisdom, the divine reason, a subordinate divine person, and the manifestation of that in Deity which is capable of being known to the finite mind. The Greek readily conceived of him as a subordinate divine person; but this was not so easy to the monotheism of the Jew.

A somewhat similar tendency may be discovered in the pages of the Old Testament, in its frequent representation of an Angel who personates the Supreme God. In it the Angel of the Lord is constantly arrayed in divine attributes. This representation involves the principle of thought which requires a mediator to be the channel of communication between the infinite and the finite. The conception of this Angel was sufficient to satisfy the unspeculative nature of the Jew. The unfolding of the idea of the Logos only took place after Judaism had come into contact with the Greek mind. Traces of its gradual development may be found in the Septuagint and the book of Wisdom. It culminated at Alexandria, where Jewish theology, Oriental speculation, and Greek philosophy found their point of union.

It must be observed that it is very questionable whether the Logos of the School of Philo is conceived of as a person. He is certainly not the Messiah. The book of Revelation is probably the earliest writing in which he is arrayed in distinct Messianic attributes, and identified with the divine manifestation which exhibited itself in the person of our Lord. The Gnostic Sects uniformly represented him in the character of an agent subordinate to the Supreme God. Although St. John applies it to Christ in the proem of his Gospel, he nowhere represents him as attributing the designation to himself.

It is very doubtful how far this line of thought had penetrated into Palestine at the period of the Advent. The fact that St. John nowhere describes our Lord as applying the title to himself, implies that it had not. Nor is the supposition itself a probable one. But as we are prepared to concede to our opponents the use of the book of Enoch, we will do the same with this conception. As it existed at the Advent it must have been a mere abstract conception, which could have afforded small help in the delineation of our Lord's divine portraiture.

The whole of the tendencies of the School of thought of which Philo was the centre, were separated by an immense interval from those of the School of Christ. Renan has designated Philo as the elder brother of our Lord; but on what grounds it is difficult to conjecture. His own portraiture of Jesus is utterly unlike anything which could

have sprung out of the Alexandrian tone of thought, which is a metaphysical, mystical theology. But, according to Renan, neither did our Lord's person nor his teaching exhibit one trace of this. The supposed presence of a metaphysical theology in the discourses of the fourth Gospel is his great reason for asserting that they are not authentic utterances of our Lord. Such a tone of thought might have gone on evolving itself for ever, but no Jesus of the Gospels would have arisen before the vision of the metaphysical speculator.

The remaining developments of Judaism were retrograde. They produced that spirit of the Jewish mind which is so prominent a feature in the Gospels, and which ultimately culminated in the form of Rabbinism.

Respecting two of these, little need be said. The Sadducees were a small and unpopular party, and could have contributed no element to the evolution of Christianity. The religion of the Essene involved the whole principle of asceticism. The influence of this sect was larger than we should expect from their numbers. They held some exalted doctrines, combined with much which was absurd; but they are not once referred to in the Gospels. The religious life of Jesus and of the Essene stand in marked contrast. Our Lord's was one of the most untiring activity, spent in the thickest haunts of men. That of the Essene was in the desert. The Essene was a monk.

It is idle to deny the essential opposition between our Lord and the principles of Phariseeism as they are exhibited in the Gospels. The Pharisaic party are there described as his active opponents from one end of his ministry to the other. He expressly declares that the essence of their system was hypocrisy. His forerunner addressed both the Pharisees and the Sadducees who approached him as a generation of vipers. Our Lord denounced the principles of the former sect in a manner in which he assailed no other form of moral evil. Throughout the whole of the Gospels we do not find one qualifying word in favour of the principles on which it was based. Like all other religious parties, they doubtless contained men better than their principles. Such was the case with the scribe whom our Lord pronounced not far from the kingdom of heaven. But while this is admitted, it is never allowed to qualify



our Lord's condemnation of the tendencies of the party. He seems never wearied of holding them up to the reprobation of the people. It is possible to assert that our Lord was mistaken in his unqualified reprobation of the tendencies of Phariseeism; but with the Gospels in our hand, it is impossible to doubt that their authors viewed it as utterly opposed to his religious teaching.

It is true that during the last week of our Lord's life, the leading Sadducees became very active in opposition to him, and were the immediate agents in effecting his death. In a similar manner, according to the Acts of the Apostles, the chiefs of this party were the first persecutors of the infant Church, while those of the opposite party became counsellors of moderation. But it is no less apparent that those teachers who were most active in attempting to impose the yoke of the law on the Gentile converts, and who tracked the steps of St. Paul wherever he went, were the genuine representatives of Pharisaic Judaism.

The essence of Phariseeism must be sought, not only in its self-righteous aspect, but in its transforming religion into the minutest system of ritualism and casuistry. As our Lord described it, it invariably preferred small to great duties; and outward observances to inward realities. Thus it deprived religion and morality of all their essential life. In our Lord's day it was in growth, but it had not attained its full development until the system of Rabbinism was completed, four or five centuries subsequent to the Advent.

It has been said,\* that "the wholesale denunciations of 'Scribes and Pharisees' contained in the New Testament have been greatly misunderstood. There can be absolutely no question on this point, that there were among the genuine Pharisees the most patriotic, the most noble-minded, the most advanced leaders of the party of progress. The development of the law itself was nothing in their hands, but a means to keep the spirit as opposed to the word—the outward frame—in full life and flame, and to vindicate for each time the full right to interpret the temporal ordinances according to its own necessities and requirements." The same writer also tells us, that "No greater or more antiquated mistake exists than that of their being a mere 'sect,'

\* See *Quarterly Review*, No. 246, Article TALMUD.

hated by Christ and the Apostles. They were not a sect any more than the Roman Catholics form a 'sect' in Rome, or Protestants a 'sect' in England; and they were not hated so indiscriminately by Christ and his Apostles, as would at first sight appear from some sweeping passages in the New Testament. For the 'Pharisees,' as such, were at that time—Josephus notwithstanding—simply the people, in contradistinction to the leaven of Herod."

We shall not dispute that the great body of the Jewish people were deeply imbued with Pharisaic principles in the time of our Lord. The Gospels themselves expressly assert it. "For the Pharisees and ALL THE JEWS, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the traditions of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash their hands they eat not; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, of brazen vessels, and of tables."—(Mark vii. 3.) This may be said to be only an opinion of the Evangelist Mark. He asserts this of the Pharisees and of certain of the Jerusalem Scribes. But he has gone further than this, and has directly attributed the following words to his Master: "He answered and said unto them, Full well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For setting aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups, and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. . . . Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered." It is easy to cite from the Gospels numerous passages of equal severity, uttered without a single qualification, until they culminate in the terrific denunciation of the hypocrisy and other evil principles of this party, addressed to the disciples and the multitude, in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew.

As we have observed, this passage fully establishes the fact that the great body of the Jews were leavened with the principles of Phariseeism; and we have no dispute with the writer that those principles were the development of the

religious life into which the Jewish nation was fairly set. This is the representation of the entire New Testament, and may be abundantly proved by the subsequent history of the Jewish people. Still we must contend that the Pharisees were in the proper sense of the term a sect; and that this is implied by the above and other passages of the Gospels, although they were a sect which was rapidly embracing the entire national life. Of this we shall adduce the testimony of the greatest Pharisee who ever lived, the Apostle Paul. "After the manner of the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." (Acts xxvi. 5.) "As touching the law a Pharisee." (Phil. iii. 5.) "I profited in the Jews religion above many *mine equals* in mine own nation." (Gal. i. 14.) Whatever authority we may be disposed to attach to the Gospels on such subjects, it is evident that they not only contain the traditions of the Church on these points, but exhibit the definite opinions of their immediate authors. Josephus likewise, himself a Pharisee, positively asserts that they were a sect, greatly admired by the people; so that, if we are determined to adhere to the views of the writer in question, we must add, "Josephus and St. Paul notwithstanding."

We are also ready to admit that they were not "hated" by Christ and his Apostles. The representation of the Gospels is, that he who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, hated no man. But the Gospels represent, whatever weight we may attach to them as history, that our Lord denounced the principles and the practices of the Scribes and Pharisees as such with a terrible energy. The Acts of the Apostles also make it evident that the Pharisaic party which had attached itself to the Christian Church were the untiring opponents of St. Paul, and it fully concedes that the great body of the Christian Jews of the pure Israelitish type were imbued with these principles. James is made to address that Apostle: "Thou secest, brother, how many thousands (*Greek* 'ten thousands') of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous for the law. And they are informed of thee that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, nor to walk after the customs." (Acts xxi. 20, &c.) But if the

historical value of the Acts of the Apostles is denied, we adduce the unquestionable authority of the Epistle to the Galatians, the genuineness of which is undisputed. "I would," says he, "that they were cut off that trouble you." Can it be doubted that these were Christianized Jews of the Pharisaic party?

With such assertions of the New Testament, and in behalf of its general aspect, we must demur to the view maintained by this writer, that "there were among the genuine Pharisees the most patriotic, the most noble-minded, and the most advanced leaders of the party of progress." In place of the word "progress," we must substitute "retrogression," as being the characteristic of the Pharisaic development of Judaism. We are unable to distinguish anything like progress in the teaching that the washing of cups and pots and tables were important matters of religion; that moral defilement could be contracted by eating particular kinds of food; that it was unlawful to do good deeds on Sabbath days; that small duties were to be attended to, while great ones might be neglected; that oaths which were taken by particular things had no binding power, and generally in a teaching, the practical result of which was to bind on men's shoulders heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, which those who did so did not touch with one of their fingers. Still less can we admit that a party, of whom so graphic a picture is drawn in the New Testament, could have adopted as their leading idea, "the development of the law as a means to keep the spirit as opposed to the word—the outward frame—in full life and flame." However little weight we may attach to the historical character of the Gospels, it cannot be denied that their authors must have embodied the views prevalent in the Christian Church during the first century respecting the general outline of the Pharisaic development of thought; and as such they uniformly represent the principle of Phariseeism as a denial of the spirit of religion, while it professed a most rigid adherence to its form. If the contrary opinion be correct, it is impossible to say that we have arrived at the view in question through misunderstanding the assertions of the New Testament on the subject; but the blame must be laid in the proper quarter, viz., on the authors of the New Testament, who have mistaken the character of

Phariseeism, and attributed their mistaken conceptions of it to our Lord.

But what is the evidence on which the contrary view is represented as resting? The Talmud, of which one portion, the Mishna, is admitted to have been committed to writing not less than about two, and the other, the Gemara, not less than five centuries after the Christian Era. It is admitted that the whole had been previously transmitted traditionally, and that it had occupied nearly one thousand years in its formation. What is the evidence that Judaism itself did not get impregnated with many Christian views during this long interval, and that it may not have incorporated them into its teaching? Taking the date which the believers in the mythic theory assign for the publication of the Synoptics as the true one, which we by no means allow, the Mishna was not written till more than a hundred years after. It is quite as probable, therefore, that the last Rabbinical development of Judaism may have been borrowed from Christ, as it is unquestionable that Julian's reform of Paganism was, a little more than a century after, and long before the composition of the Gemara.

But this is far from being the whole question at issue. Let it be granted that all the elements of Christian morality are to be found in the Talmud. Even if they had all been discovered prior to Christianity as detached precepts, the real question at issue is, what is the relation in which they stand to their respective systems. What are the central portions and what are the subordinate parts of their morality? How do the higher portions of morality of the Talmud stand related to its ceremonialism, ritualism, and casuistry? The Talmud contains a whole library of matter: the Gospels are a little book. How is the morality and spirituality of the one related to the remaining contents of the other? Above all, on what great system of motivity are the moral precepts based, and to what tendency of thought do they belong? The spirit of Phariseeism can make itself a home in the midst of the most Evangelical system of thought, and convert it from the morality of the Gospels into legalism. How can a lofty spirit of morality co-exist with the most hair-splitting casuistry which has ever existed?

There can be no doubt that the Phariseeism of the time



of our Lord was the parent of Rabbinism; and that the movement ultimately embraced the great body of the Jewish nation. What line did it take? Did it evolve the aspects of Gospel morality, which has made the Christian a law unto himself, or was it a system of pure legalism? The relative bulk of the New Testament and of the Talmud will be an answer to this question. The little book contains more than all which is good in the twelve folios. A small quantity of wine becomes a different article when it has been diluted with an immense quantity of water. The tone of thought which produced the Phariseeism of the New Testament, and ultimately produced the sentiments of the Talmud united with its various frivolities, was a movement in a contrary direction to that which could have created the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists.

The history of the times presents us with the most unquestionable evidence as to the nature of the Pharisaic and Rabbinical development of Judaism. In the reign of Adrian it produced its Messiah in the person of the impostor Bar-Chocobas. The Rabbinism of the day viewed him as the embodiment of its hopes and aspirations. He was proclaimed Messiah by the great Rabbi Akibah, and was the leader of his countrymen in the second great war of independence, which terminated, if possible, more disastrously than the first. However he may have been subsequently denounced, his pretensions were acknowledged by the national Jewish party, and by a considerable portion of the nation.

What was the character of this Messiah? Was he the embodiment of a lofty spirituality or of a pure morality? Was he an exhibition of the humble and unobtrusive virtues as distinguished from the heroic? After making every allowance for the distortions to which it may have been exposed, it must be pronounced to be the very opposite to that of Jesus. The case stands thus. The national Jewish party rejected our Lord. In about a century afterwards, when their system had become fully developed, they accepted the impostor as the Messiah for whose advent they were sighing. It is impossible to have a stronger proof of the direction and character of the real tendencies of Jewish thought.

We conclude, therefore, that Phariseeism, as a system of

religion and morality, was intensely adverse to that exhibited in the person and teaching of our Lord, and that it had leavened with its principles the active religious and moral life of the Jewish nation. It must have been in active development during the whole period in which our Lord and his Apostles were employed in creating Christianity. It formed a retrograde development from a state of feeling which had been originally great and noble. The invasion of foreign ideas during the reign of the Grecian kings had threatened to shake the national life to its centre. The patriotic party of those days strove to intrench themselves against their influences by a closer adhesion to the letter of the national institutions. At last arose the Maccabean liberators of their country, whose history forms one of the noblest examples of heroism in the history of man. But when the danger had been surmounted, the heroic spirit gradually died out, and left behind in all their vigour the ignoble feelings with which it had been combined, and which gradually ripened into those principles which in the time of Christ distinguished the Pharisaic party. It is melancholy to think that a band of patriots were the progenitors of the adversaries of Christ.

Such was the aspect which Judaism presented during the earthly life of Jesus. The principles of a higher life still remained, such as we see exhibited in Simeon, Anna, and Zechariah, and in many of those who afterwards took refuge in the Christian Church. But the national life was flowing in an opposite direction. In the midst of these tendencies Christianity was born and developed. We will now proceed to inquire whether those who deny the historical character of the Gospels propound any account of their origin which will endure the test of rational investigation.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THE PORTRAITURE OF CHRIST AS DEPICTED BY THE FOUR  
EVANGELISTS CONSTITUTES AN ESSENTIAL UNITY.

It is a vital point with those who impugn the historical character of the Gospels to disprove the unity of the conception of our Lord as it is portrayed in our existing

records, and to show that the earlier myths out of which it has been composed presented still more striking points of diversity. They are fully aware that if the character of the Jesus of the Evangelists presents a substantial unity, the theory which endeavours to account for it on the supposition of its mythic origin, must collapse beneath its own weight.

Every statement of the Gospels has therefore been made the subject of the minutest criticism, and every possible objection urged against it. History has been searched to show that some assertion of the Sacred Writers contradicts it. Numerous assumptions have been made as to the circumstances under which the early Church developed itself, and the existence of various parties within it, to whose conflicting influences different portions of the Gospels have been assigned. These assumptions have been made on a very slender basis of fact, and frequently on what is no better than a species of historical guess work and divination. On such principles Lives of Jesus have been published, which have supplied the absence of trustworthy evidence by allowing the most unlimited freedom of conjecture. Lastly, the utmost care has been taken to divert our attention from the real historical unity which underlies the diversities of the Gospels.

The reason of this is obvious. The mythic theory becomes untenable, the moment it is perceived that our four Gospels and the various parts of which they are composed, amidst their numerous diversities present us with one great central figure, depicted in every variety of aspect, but yet possessing a central unity. It is just as rational to ask us to believe that a well-proportioned building has been the result of the labours of a thousand workmen, who without plan or order have heaped together stones according to the suggestions of their respective fancies.

The diversities contained in the Gospels have been the chief means by which it has been attempted to demonstrate their unhistorical character. We shall prove that the existence of these, united with a substantial unity in the portraiture of the Christ which they present to us, is the strongest possible proof of their general historical credibility.

We are, therefore, fully prepared to admit the existence

of the diversities; without them, in fact, our argument would be incomplete. Even if they were more numerous than they are, they would impart to it additional strength, as long as they did not interfere with the unity of the portraiture of our Lord. But truth compels us to admit that the maintainers of the mythic theory have greatly exaggerated their nature and extent.

We concede, therefore, that each of the Gospels bears the impress of a special design which its author sought to realize in its composition. Matthew's Gospel is the Jewish version of the life of Christ; Luke's the Gentile one; while that of Mark occupies a place intermediate between the two. We are also ready to concede that there exists a very considerable difference in idea between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics, though not greater than four minds very differently constituted might have taken of such a being as the Christ. We admit that the general aspect of the Synoptics leads to the inevitable conclusion, that they are three different reports of an oral Gospel which was current in the Apostolic Church, and which contained its belief as to the person of our Lord; or more probably of one which was partly oral, and partly had been reduced to writing. Our Gospels are of a very fragmentary character, and bear no resemblance to a regularly composed biography. Although they contain a large portion of common matter, it is narrated with very considerable variety of detail. In the greater proportion of the variations which one narrative presents when compared with another, it is impossible to detect any special design or purpose in the alterations.

Some of them bear stronger indications of resting on autoptic testimony than others; Matthew's bears less strong marks of directly representing the testimony of an eye-witness than Mark's, or even Luke's, who avows the fact that his Gospel is a compilation founded on the highest testimony he could procure. Many portions of them present traces of having passed through several stages of oral transmission before they were committed to writing; and there are not wanting indications that parts of them have been derived from written documents subsequently modified by oral transmission, and then again committed to writing in their present form. The discourses in Matthew's

Gospel have the strongest claims to be viewed as the most accurate reports of the utterances of our Lord. But while this is generally the case, there are discourses in Mark and Luke which bear distinct indications of being closer reports of our Lord's actual words than the corresponding ones in Matthew. These discourses and their variations in the different Evangelists, united as they frequently are with the closest verbal agreements, are the most remarkable phenomenon in the Gospels; to which no parallel can be found in the whole course of literature. Generally the Synoptics have the appearance which we should expect, if the original account of our Lord's ministry had been transmitted orally, and portions of this oral Gospel committed to writing, and afterwards used for the purposes of instruction, and if our existing Gospels had been composed out of materials of this description. We are also ready to concede that the authors of the Gospels, and possibly the authors of many of the fragments which have been incorporated into them, contemplated our Lord's person from a somewhat different point of view, which has had the effect of more or less modifying the accounts which they have given us of his ministry.

Now, the vast amount of diversity which our Gospels present us with, both in their form and aspect, constitutes an irresistible proof that they are the work of various minds. No single mind, nor even several minds, by any amount of united efforts, could have constructed four histories containing the agreements and disagreements, the samenesses and variations, which are presented by our Gospels. So decisive are the indications of separate authorship that no powers of deception could by any possibility have produced them.

We may feel, therefore, the most distinct assurance that our knowledge of the life of Christ has not been derived from a single source of information, but from many. We discover the presence of a large number of distinct human personalities and human agencies employed in the transmission. But in the midst of this multiplicity of agency, we discover the most unquestionable unity of result. The greater the evidence which they afford of the presence of distinct human personality, the stronger is the proof afforded by the substantial unity which underlies them,



that they are not inventions, but four copies of a great historical reality.

If, therefore, we can establish the fact, that a substantial unity underlies the whole portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists, we shall prove that the Divine Man whom they depict could not have been an ideal creation, but a reality, of which each Evangelist has given us a portrait taken from a somewhat different point of view.

The idea which lies at the foundation of all the four Gospels is, that the being whose life and actions they delineate is both divine and human. If their authors had been required to embody in strict logical formularies the precise degree of divinity which they ascribed to their Christ, they might probably have expressed themselves differently. Strict definition, such as that of the later creeds, was the farthest from their thoughts. But one idea uniformly underlies the whole of their creation, viz., that the being whose life and actions they were depicting was a divine man. Whatever distinction may be supposed to exist as to the conception of the Christ between the fourth Gospel and the Synoptics, nothing can be more clear than that the assumption that the person whom they are depicting was in some way or other more nearly allied to Deity than other men is the fundamental groundwork of the conception of the latter. There is not a single narrative or discourse in them which is inconsistent with this idea. Of the greater proportion of them it constitutes the essence of the conception.

So uniform is this aspect of the person of our Lord throughout the Synoptic Gospels, that it is impossible to account for it on the supposition that their authors have imparted it to the materials which they used in their composition. It is interwoven into the very essence of the materials themselves, and is no outward dress which they have been made to put on. It is not impressed on the great features only, but on the minutest details of the Evangelical portraiture. It belongs to their conception and not to their form. To suppose the conception of the person of the Christ a purely human one involves a complete recasting of all and every portion of the representation.

It follows, therefore, that, if the Synoptic Gospels are

of a mythic origin in all or any of their features, this particular view of our Lord's person has not been due to those who have set forth the Gospels in their present form. It must have been inherent in the myths out of which they were composed. All their inventors must have endeavoured to embody in their creations the conception of one who was a divine man, and have succeeded in their attempt. When criticism attempts to pare down the Jesus of the Evangelists into a purely human one, it does not present us with a reformed Gospel narrative, but destroys it altogether.

It is a point to which we wish to draw attention, that the whole portraiture of the Evangelical Jesus is framed in the strictest conformity with this conception; and that if it consists of a large number of distinct fragments, as the mythic or legendary theory pre-supposes, the several parts have all been elaborated on identically the same model. They resemble a set of stones which have been all previously cut out and adapted to the place which they were to occupy in a great building, and when they came to be put together, fell into their proper places with the most perfect adjustment. Each fragment of the portraiture of the Christ has been framed in strict subservience to the predominant character of the whole, though that great whole had not yet been created. There is not to be found throughout the Gospels an aspect of a Christ so intensely human as to be inconsistent with his being divine, nor so intensely divine as to exclude the fact of his humanity.

We readily admit the difference between the discourses of our Lord as recorded by St. John, and those which have been handed down to us by the Synoptics. But when the supporters of the mythic theory assume from this that there is a substantial difference between the Jesus of St. John and the Jesus of the Synoptics, they infer more than the premisses will bear. The fourth Gospel contains assertions of divinity compared with which those in the Synoptics are but feeble echoes. But when we compare the mode in which the divine man is dramatised in this Gospel with that in which he is exhibited in the Synoptics the distinction wholly disappears. The divine aspect of the portraiture in the Synoptics is quite equal to

that in the fourth Gospel; we think it in some respects even superior to it; certainly, there is nothing in St. John which comes up to the full height of the majesty with which he is exhibited in St. Matthew in his character of the future Judge, or when he demands on the part of his followers the absolute surrender of every human tie in favour of subjection to himself. In both his sense of inherent dignity is equally profound. In St. John the assertions of Deity are direct; the Synoptics have put into his mouth sayings which are only explicable on the principle of its assumption. With two exceptions, the miracles recorded by St. John differ from those in the Synoptics. But it is impossible to pretend that the miracles of the former exhibit him in a more divine aspect than those of the latter. In the Synoptics our Lord's teaching is uniformly described as issuing from the depths of his own consciousness, and he is described, on the strength of it alone, as modifying and repealing on his own authority laws which were admitted to be divine. But while it possesses this same aspect in the fourth Gospel, he again and again asserts its derivation from the Father.

Nor is the portraiture of our Lord's person, as we see it in St. John, less intensely human than as it is exhibited in the Synoptics. This portion of the subject is most favourable for instituting the comparison. The details of our Lord's human manifestation in this Gospel vary from those in the Synoptics. But he is arrayed in exactly the same human vesture as in the latter Gospels. The agony in the Garden is not here, but we find him portrayed in an aspect no less intensely human than in the others. It is evident that St. John could not have been induced to omit certain things which are passed over in this Gospel because he thought them too intensely human to be ascribed to the divine man.

Notwithstanding the strength of its dogmatical statements, several aspects of our Lord's divine character are entirely passed over in this Gospel. The Synoptics have repeatedly depicted him in the act of forgiving sins, and as persisting in doing this even after his enemies have hinted to him that he is venturing to exercise a peculiar function of Deity. He is never once so portrayed in the fourth Gospel. St. John designates him as the Logos,

but nowhere do we find in his Gospel such a scene as the Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory, surrounded by the angels of his might, or those frequent exhibitions of self-conscious worthiness which claim to supersede every other human obligation. Nowhere do we find in St. John an expression more majestic than the saying of the Synoptics, "He that shall deny me before men, I will deny him before the angels of God."

It is necessary to be particular in examining this portion of the subject, because it is only here that it can be alleged with even an appearance of plausibility that either of the Evangelists presents us with a different aspect of the person of the Christ. The difference amounts to this, that while the dramatised portraiture of our Lord is no higher in the fourth Gospel than it is exhibited in the Synoptics, St. John has recorded discourses which contain more direct assertions of his divine character than are to be found in the first three Gospels. These Gospels, however, contain shorter discourses which approximate towards the discourses of St. John.

But a comparison of the portraiture of our Lord as delineated in the Synoptics and in St. John makes it evident that they have not presented us with the picture of two different Christs, but with that of the same divine man taken in two different attitudes, and surveyed from different points of view.

However large, therefore, may have been the number of fictions incorporated into the Gospels, and however numerous their authors, one great and substantial unity underlies all and every portion of them. One fundamental idea must have been embodied in the separate mythic creations, which, when put together, have created the great portraiture. They have all delineated a character which was to be an exhibition in a single person of the attributes of the divine and human, and all modelled it on precisely the same principles, with an equal unity in its delineation, as if they had copied from the same original.

All four Evangelists have portrayed their Jesus as possessing precisely the same form and aspect of a divine consciousness. This again is so interwoven into the essence of the Gospels, that it is impossible to account for it on the supposition that each Evangelist modified the myths out of which he composed his Gospel, so as to

impart to them this peculiar aspect and character. It is so essential a portion of the entire portraiture, that if the original stories did not possess it, it could only have been imparted to them by recomposing them. Even if this could be esteemed a possibility, the fact that four minds have succeeded, while acting quite independently of each other, in creating this substantial unity, will be equally to our purpose.

But we are entitled to infer from the phenomena, that this substantial unity in the Evangelical delineation must have existed in the mythic stories out of which they are said to have been created. If, therefore, whatever exists in the Gospels existed in the mythic delineations, they must have uniformly exhibited our Lord's knowledge of divine and moral truth as springing from an inward fountain of light. The whole portraiture of the Evangelists is here in perfect harmony both in great points and in small. St. John is in absolute agreement with the Synoptics, both in the conception and the form of its representation. Jesus, although he is portrayed in a great variety of situations, is never once described as deriving his knowledge of truth from a source external to himself; never once is he exhibited in ecstasy: never once as overpowered by a prophetic rapture, but he is always calm. This same aspect is maintained in those portions of the narrative which are said to be most highly mythical, as well as in those which have been admitted to be historical. We infer that this unity of portraiture must have existed in the myths out of which the Gospels are said to have originated.

Equally uniform is the aspect of serene repose in the absolute possession of truth, in which the original legends must have invariably portrayed the divine man.

The Gospels are perfectly uniform in depicting our Lord as invested with a superhuman greatness of character. In no one instance can we find a single trait of littleness or meanness. Whether in the act of teaching, or in social intercourse, or in the presence of his enemies, or as a worker of miracles, or as seated on his throne of universal Judge, he is always great; nay, he is great under the burden of his cross, and in the midst of the triumph of his foes.

At the same time, in every position in which the Evan-



gelists have portrayed him, he is depicted as exhibiting a greatness combined with the most perfect condescension. The Evangelists are unanimous in investing the greatest of men with an equal greatness of humility. This is done throughout the Gospels with an inimitable perfection. Even those portions which are alleged to be most completely mythic are thoroughly impressed with it. The minutest details of it have been evidently stamped in the same mint. We therefore infer that this same uniformity of character must have pervaded the whole mass of myths out of which the Evangelists elaborated their Jesus.

The same aspect of the consciousness of his relationship to God is not only preserved with an absolute uniformity throughout the whole of the Evangelical narratives, but as we have seen, it is preserved in points of the minutest accuracy in the words which they have put into his mouth.

Our opponents are unanimous in proclaiming that all and every one of the Gospel miracles are mythic. They are pure fictions and nothing more. But fictitious as they are, and the inventions of numerous and credulous mythologists, they are all, with one exception, characterized by a common type of conception. Viewed as a collection of miraculous stories, they are absolutely unique in character, and are exactly such as, if for the sake of argument we concede that miracles are possible, one claiming to be a divine man should have performed. Amidst the immense mass of the miraculous which either truth or fiction has created, the Gospel miracles, both in their nature and in the mode of their performance, occupy a position wholly to themselves. Although the spirit of the times was loaded with an atmosphere of the miraculous, and numerous as the authors of these myths must have been, not one of them invented, and attributed to Jesus a miracle which was inconsistent with the great conception of his character. We have taken it for granted that the Evangelists could not have toned down the wildness of the original stories to their present form; and even if we could conceive of this as possible, the fact still remains indisputable that four distinct collectors of the miraculous legends must have invested every one of them with precisely the same aspect, and assigned to the worker of them the same portraiture.

It is beyond dispute that the aspect in which our Lord is portrayed as a sufferer is identically the same in all four Evangelists. Throughout he exhibits the same submission, the same divine and human consciousness, the same absolute self-command, the same powers of endurance, the same mild benevolence, the same absolute submission to the Divine will. The scenes in which he is portrayed are varied, but it cannot be denied that the four portraiture of the suffering Jesus are representations of the same individuality surveyed from different points of view. All the legends must have been invented so as to dramatise the idealization of character, and must have possessed an essential unity.

A similar uniformity exists throughout all four Evangelists in the mode in which they have blended the attributes of holiness and benevolence in the person of their Christ. The whole representation is thoroughly consistent throughout. Let it be observed that this aspect of our Lord's character is impressed not only on those portions of the Evangelical narrative which may be in some degree historical, but on those which, if the supporters of the mythic theory are correct, must be unquestionably fabulous. Still the Gospels do not present us with one single trait of any variation in the conception of the character of their Jesus. Various as were the modes in which such a character might have been delineated, yet if we examine every detail of the Evangelical narrative we shall find these attributes dramatised in the person of Jesus in exactly the same proportions.

We infer, therefore, that all the mythologists must have concurred in delineating a character, of which, while it presents the highest form of benevolence, that attribute was not the sole or single manifestation. While they have created a character the most mild and loving, they have also concurred in investing it with an aspect of severity when brought into contact with a particular form of evil. In all these points the character of our Lord presents a perfect unity of aspect as it is depicted in the pages of the Evangelists. They do not present us with the slightest indication of the existence of a myth which portrayed him in a different aspect.

The mythologists must also have been unanimous in depicting our Lord as possessing a character absolutely

unselfish. This is evident from the fact that we may search the Evangelists from one end to the other, and we shall fail to find one single trait of selfishness, or of human self-love, even in the minutest point, disfiguring his character. The positions in which he is placed in the Gospels, where this aspect of human nature would have been called forth into active energy if it existed in him, are very numerous, and yet the smallest trace of it is nowhere to be found. This aspect of pure unselfishness is deeply impressed in those portions of the Gospels which might be considered as pre-eminently legendary; nowhere more than in their miraculous narratives.

While the Gospels have depicted our Lord in the attitude of unbending sternness towards sin, they are no less unanimous in their delineation of him as absorbed by the tenderest compassion for those who were under its thralldom. This trait of his character is deeply interwoven into the entire structure of the Gospels, and must therefore have been a feature in the myths out of which they have originated. The mythologists have been unanimous in delineating a being who was at the same time sternly holy, and superhumanly kind.

No trait of our Lord's character, as it is delineated in the Gospels, is more remarkable than its self-assertion. In this respect it presents no parallel in history. At the same time this most peculiar feature is blended with the profoundest humility. The whole is most intimately interwoven into the very structure of the Gospels, and must, therefore, have existed in the original myths. It is impossible for any careful reader to mistake the unity of aspect which they present on this important point. It is one, the fine touches of which defy all imitation.

With no less marked unanimity have the authors of the Gospels concurred in investing our Lord with the mild, unobtrusive, and humbler forms of virtue, rather than those of an heroic type. In every aspect of his portraiture not only are these forms predominant, as giving a general character to the whole conception of him, but as forming the fundamental principle of the morality which he taught. Those portions of the Gospels which our opponents, without the smallest hesitation, pronounce to be mythic, are no less stamped with them than those to which they are willing to

concede some particles of historical reality. This idea, therefore, must have formed a portion of the conception of the original myths, and their inventors must have impressed this moral aspect upon them, although they lived in and breathed a moral atmosphere in which the contrary elements were predominant. In one word, they must have all concurred spontaneously in inventing this peculiar aspect of morality.

Whatever view we may take of the perfection of the morality of the Gospels, it is plain that it bears the most unquestionable evidences that it is the product and the coinage of a common mint. Its principles are the same throughout. It forms a great and connected whole. While it recognizes all the great moral principles of human nature, it seeks to create one which should overtop them all—the presentation to God of all the powers of man in an act of self-sacrifice. The morality of the Gospels is not scattered here and there, but is diffused over the whole surface, which is throughout fragrant with the sweetness of the odour which it distils.

The same spirit of morality, and one founded on the same principles, is uniformly maintained even in those portions of the Gospels which are said to be pre-eminently mythic. A moral element enters into the whole miraculous narrative. Many of the most glorious displays of our Lord's character are exhibited in the performance of his miraculous acts. We do not discover in them the smallest trace that the authors of the myths which compose them varied in their moral ideas, or picked up their moral principles in different schools of thought. The morality of the Gospels is no tessellated work, composed of different materials which have been skilfully adjusted to each other. We are unable to discover the smallest trace of a piece of it having been culled from Plato, and a piece from Aristotle, or another portion borrowed from the school of the Stoics, and another from that of Epicurus. Whatever portion of it is common to the morality of Judaism, is entirely divested of its Jewish aspect. It resembles a building which has been erected of stones all hewn in the same quarry, and all carefully fitted for the respective places which they were to occupy. Nor have ordinary stones anywhere been employed in the erection of the edifice.

These are all of the purest marble. In one word, the morality is uniform throughout. It consists of the purest principles, free from every species of alloy. It is neither the morality of Socrates, nor even of Moses or Isaiah, but of Christ.

This morality is so completely inherent in the Gospels, that it is impossible to suppose that it can be an addition to the mythic stories for which we are indebted to the labours of the four Evangelists. It is so thoroughly infused into the essence of the most mythical narratives, that we are compelled to assume that it must have formed an integral portion of the myths themselves, and by a necessary consequence the morality involved in them must have been the ideal morality of their authors.

The Gospels are unanimous in ascribing the highest ideal of morality to our Lord. This morality they have described him as actually realizing in his own practice, and they have dramatised it in him without flaw. He is purity throughout, and is described as absolutely devoid of any stain or sense of sin. But while they have described our Lord's morality as that which his followers are to imitate and towards which they are to approximate, they have shown that they were fully sensible that this was not a possible morality suited for the existing state of human nature. While they have been unanimous in depicting our Lord as absolutely unselfish, and described his moral character as a state towards which the Christian is to labour to attain, and to look to as his great model, they have recognized that the principle of enlightened self-love as a rule of action is one with which it is impossible to dispense in our present state. There is no elevated moral principle to which they do not appeal as a guide to human conduct, and a motive to action.

It is no less apparent that another thought underlies the whole of the morality of the Gospels, namely, the purpose which their authors had of enthroning their Master in the human heart as the great centre of all moral obligation. Other motives were secondary to this, but this is their end and aim.

No less unanimous are all four Gospels in their representation of faith as the great source of spiritual strength. This view is peculiar to the teaching of Christ, and belongs to no



other. Still it is carried out through every portion of the Gospels with the most absolute consistency. It tinges the conception of every portion of the narrative. It is particularly prominent in those parts of it which are alleged to be the most mythic. So closely inwrought is this principle with the entire structure of the Gospels that it leads to the inevitable conclusion that it is no afterthought of those who reduced the myths to their present form, but that it must have been an original feature in the myths themselves.

The whole of these myths must also have presented another aspect in which the authors were singularly unanimous—their determination never to depict their Christ as a worker of miracles in the spiritual world, while they showed the most determined purpose to know him in no other character in the natural. With this purpose in view they were content to depict the progress of our Lord as a teacher, as a slow and painful one. They all unanimously delineated their Jesus as using nothing but a spiritual agency in his efforts to work on the human mind, and never even in the greatest emergencies attempting to invoke the aid of a material one. The whole structure of the Gospels is framed in the strictest subordination to this idea, and on it the myths which compose them must have presented an entire unity of conception.

Such then is the nature of the unity which pervades the Gospels in the conception and in the dramatisation of their Jesus. It is not a unity as to some one trait of that character, but it is one which pervades all its various modifications. The portraiture of our Lord does not consist of the dramatised action of any one single moral attribute, but it is formed out of the united action of all which are pure, holy, and divine. These are all shaded and combined with exquisite skill. To have created the conception of a character which should embody a single perfection would have been comparatively easy, although even this, when it comes to be attempted by numbers of men acting independently of each other, could only be exhibited with great variations of detail. But the great work which the Evangelists have accomplished is, that not only all four Gospels dramatise a single attribute in the person of Jesus with a perfect unity of conception, but they have succeeded in presenting us with a perfect unity in their dramatisation of a number of attri-

butes of a very complicated nature, and have interwoven each in precisely the same proportions in the character which they have depicted. Not only does the character which they have framed present us with a unity as a whole in all four Evangelists, but when we analyse it, the same unity pervades each of its respective portions.

It is impossible to conceive of any question more complicated than the manner in which such a problem might have been solved. It involves the determination of the most profound questions connected with religion and morality. Supposing a mythologist had proposed to himself to create and dramatise a conception of a Messiah, it would have been necessary to solve all these questions before he could set himself to commence his undertaking. The Gospels present us with four portraits of Jesus, in which all these questions have been solved unanimously by four distinct and independent compilers of the history of Christ. If the mythic theory of the origin of the Gospels be correct, it is evident that a similar unanimity must have pervaded the stories out of which they originated. The myths themselves must have presented a substantial unity of type.

The discrepancies of the Gospels afford incontrovertible proof that they have been composed independently of each other, and without any previous consultation on the part of their respective authors. If they are composed of myths they afford an equally satisfactory proof of the entirely independent origination of the mythic stories. But in the midst of this diversity of a most complicated character, the Gospels present us with a grand unity, in the portraiture of their Jesus. Its existence is no matter of theory, but of fact. We apprehend that the unity of this character is subversive of every view of the Gospels which represents them as unhistorical.

These two phenomena which the Gospels unquestionably present, an absolute unity in the conception and portraiture of Jesus, combined with a very large amount of diversities and apparent discrepancies in the structure of the narrative, form the pillars of our argument.

The existence of the latter is fully conceded by the maintainers of their unhistorical character. It forms, as we have said, one of the main bases on which their theory is erected.

Nothing but the most careful comparison of the parallel portions of the Gospel narrative can give us a full insight into its character. Any reader who wishes to form a correct estimate of it, must undertake the labour of comparing together the parallel narratives, and above all the parallel discourses. We shall confine ourselves to a few observations on the latter.

In the parallel discourses we rarely find three or four consecutive lines which are word for word alike. At the same time the sense of them is precisely the same, or subject to the smallest possible variation in meaning. When we examine the variations themselves they are of a very singular character. Sometimes they consist of the transposition of a line or two into a different context. Then a line inserted by one Evangelist is omitted by another. At one time we meet with the same meaning expressed in very different words, or with a remarkable variation in grammatical construction. At other times one Evangelist inserts a passage which greatly aids in determining the sense of a more general report of another. Occasionally this is effected by the mere insertion of a single word. The extent of these verbal variations in the reports of different discourses differs considerably. There are a few discourses in all three Evangelists which are nearly word for word alike. These are occasionally followed by an utterance containing the greatest variations of expression. Sometimes two Evangelists closely agree in the words which they ascribe to our Lord, while the third presents us with striking differences. At other times considerably more than half the words in all three reports differ from each other.

One thing, however, is worthy of particular observation. Although the variations are very numerous, and their character striking, the most careful scrutiny will not enable us to discover that they have been made on any set plan, or with a deliberate purpose. From whatever cause they may have originated, as far as the Evangelists are concerned, they have every appearance of having been positively fortuitous.

These phenomena are spread over the whole surface of the Synoptic Gospels. A single instance, however, will be sufficient for the illustration of our argument.

The parable of the householder is reported in all three

Gospels. Each of the reports presents us with the most singular variations from the others. In the general structure of the parable Mark and Luke substantially agree, while Matthew differs from them. The former describe the owner of the vineyard as sending three single servants on three distinct and separate occasions. In each Evangelist the sending of the last servant is followed by the mission of his Son. But Matthew represents the householder as sending to the husbandmen a mission of several servants in a body. When this was unsuccessful he sends a second mission which consisted of a larger number of servants than the first; and this second mission is followed by the sending of his Son. Mark, however, approximates to the account in Matthew by a kind of indefinite assertion that the householder after he had sent the third servant sent many others.

The accounts in Mark and Luke agree in all substantial points as to the treatment which the three servants respectively met with; but even here with a few minor variations. Both concur in telling us that the first servant was beaten and sent empty away. In Mark the second servant is stoned, wounded in the head, and sent away shamefully handled. In Luke he is beaten, treated shamefully, and sent away empty. In Mark the third servant is killed, in Luke the husbandmen wound him and cast him out. In Matthew the variations in the treatment of the servants are in strict accordance with what may fairly be supposed to have been the original structure of the parable. We have already seen that the first mission consisted of several servants. What is done to the servants separately in Mark and Luke is done to different members of the whole collective body in Matthew. "They beat one, and killed another, and stoned another." Towards the second body of servants, they are described as acting likewise. Mark, however, approximates towards the form of the representation in Matthew, by saying that of the many others who were sent, some were beaten and some killed.

In their general account of the mission of the Son all three Evangelists are in substantial agreement, but yet with characteristic differences. Matthew's is very simple: "And last of all, he sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son." Mark, however, is more graphic:

“Having yet one Son, a beloved one, he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son.” But Luke represents the householder as saying, after the disgraceful treatment of his three servants, “What shall I do, I will send unto them my Son, my beloved one: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.” The conduct of the husbandmen on the arrival of the Son is described in words nearly identical in each Evangelist, but although nearly identical there yet is a variation. Matthew writes, “And when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come let us kill him and seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him.” This act is thus reported by Mark, “But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours: And they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.” These words are precisely the same in Luke, with only the following variations: for “said among themselves,” Luke has “reasoned among themselves;” and “for the inheritance shall be ours,” Luke, “That the inheritance may be ours;” Mark, “And they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard;” Luke, “So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.”

The conclusion of the parable presents us with a striking variation. All three concur in representing our Lord as asking, with some variation of words, what the lord of the vineyard, when he came, would do to the husbandmen. Matthew describes the answer as returned by the hearers of the parable, “They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men.” Mark’s account is consistent with the supposition that either our Lord or his hearers returned the answer. But the account in Luke is only consistent with the supposition that the Evangelist viewed the answer as returned not by the hearers of the parable, but by our Lord himself: “He shall come and destroy those husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others; and when they heard it, they said, God forbid.” At any rate this is the sense which it would suggest to any reader who knew nothing of the account in Matthew.

Such are the singular variations presented by this parable; and we have adduced them as examples of similar ones which pervade the parallel portions of the Synoptic



narrative. Variations of this kind and apparent discrepancies alike characterize the discourses and the narrative.

Whatever may have been the cause of these variations, it is impossible, on the supposition of their being intentional, to conceive any purpose which they are calculated to answer. Nor is it possible to believe that either Evangelist, having an original model of the parable before him, deliberately altered it into the form in which we read it in either of our present Gospels.

Nor is it possible to believe that such variations were purposely introduced with the view of impressing on the Gospels the air of originality, when they were in fact merely a threefold version of the same original. When we consider both their nature and extent, as they are exhibited in the pages of the Evangelists, we may safely pronounce that no amount of ingenuity was adequate to the invention of so extraordinary a contrivance.

If the variations and apparent discrepancies in the Gospels had been introduced with this intent, the purposes of the authors have met with a signal failure. They have indeed suggested the idea of the independence of each Gospel, but they have proved the stronghold of objections against their historical credibility. The phenomena which we have been discussing are utterly devoid of the appearance of purpose.

They are only consistent with one theory, namely, that the Synoptic Gospels were composed independently of each other.

Another inference is no less certain. The variations in question could not have been introduced by their authors, but must have existed in the materials out of which they composed their Gospels.

They further lead to the inevitable conclusion that the substance of the parable which we have been considering, and consequently of all those portions of the Gospels which present similar phenomena, must have undergone a considerable amount of oral transmission before they were reduced to a written form. The threefold account which we read in our Evangelists must, therefore, be three versions as handed down in the course of such oral transmission, and the variations must have been introduced in the course of such transmission.

It is further evident that each of the accounts presents us with a variation of the original form in which the parable must have existed; but with our present data it is impossible to determine with any thing approaching to certainty which was that original. The same remarks are applicable to all the passages in the Gospels which contain similar phenomena.

It is also a fact beyond the power of controversy to dispute, that amidst all the variations and apparent discrepancies in form, the unity of sense and meaning has been preserved throughout. This is applicable to all the parallel discourses, and substantially so, though not with equal perfection, to all the parallel narratives to be found in the Gospels.

No proof can be more convincing than that which is supplied by these discrepancies and apparent contradictions, that both the Gospels themselves, and the materials out of which they have been composed, must have been independent of each other; and, on the assumption of the truth of the mythic theory, that a multitude of minds must have been engaged in their elaboration. All the variations from the common form must have owed their existence to the action of individual minds.

But the Gospels present us with a unity embedded in a diversity, and a diversity indissolubly combined with a unity. The diversity proves that the unity is not the result of conscious imposition. The unity, as we shall see, will afford us the most convincing evidence that it is the copy of an historical reality and not the result of an idealized conception. The necessities of the mythic theory compel it to concede that which renders the belief in it, as an adequate solution of the facts and the phenomena of the Gospels, utterly incredible. In proportion as the myths of which they are composed are numerous, it is compelled to postulate a number of persons to invent them.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE LIMITS OF THE INFLUENCE WHICH CAN BE ASSIGNED TO  
THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN THE CREATION OF CHRISTIANITY,  
ON THE SUPPOSITION OF HIS PURELY HUMAN CHARACTER.

THIS is a point of the utmost importance in relation to our argument. As the propounders of the mythic theory pronounce the Gospels entirely untrustworthy as historical documents, they leave us in great uncertainty as to the degree of influence which ought to be attributed to the Jesus of history in their elaboration. Many have assigned to St. Paul a higher place in the erection of the Christian edifice than to its original founder. Others have elevated Jesus to the highest throne in the Pantheon of great men. A few have reduced that influence to zero by denying his personality.

This inability to assign a definite value to the work of the historic Jesus is particularly unfortunate, though well suited to the position occupied by the propounders of the mythic theory. It renders all their reasonings on the subject vague, and prevents us from bringing them to a definite test. By assigning an indefinite greatness to Jesus, whenever the necessities of the case require it, an attempt is made to divert our attention from the real difficulties with which the mythic theory is surrounded. This is more the case with those who manufacture the historical Jesus into a sort of demi-god than with those who reduce his influence to zero. We must protest against the conduct of those, who, while they deny the historical character of the Jesus of the Evangelists, invent a no less mythical one of their own, whenever it suits their convenience to do so. If the historical Jesus be not the divine Christ, it is necessary to determine the limits within which his influence must have been bounded. Unless we can do this, all reasoning on the subject is impossible.

If, in consequence of the unhistorical character of the Gospels, it is impossible to ascertain what the Jesus of history actually was, we must endeavour to determine what he could not have been. On the supposition that he was a mere man we may safely remove from our histories as fictitious every thing which places him at an elevation inconsistent with the ideas and conceptions of the times in

which he lived, as contrary to the laws of development of the human mind.

We are ready to concede that the Jesus of our opponents might have been a very great man. But if it be assumed that he could only have been a man like ourselves, his greatness must have been limited within definite bounds. His ideas of religion and morality must have had a relation to the age in which he lived. He might have been a very enlightened man for the times; but the greatest men whom the world has ever known, both in their religious, moral, and intellectual environment, have been only capable of raising themselves to a moderate elevation above the conceptions of the age which produced them. The greatest of men have never been able to break through the conditions imposed on them by the moral, intellectual, and religious atmosphere of the times in which they have been born. Tall men are genuine products of nature; but giants who rise to the height of fifty, twenty, or even twelve feet, exist only in works of fiction.

If Jesus was a purely human teacher, it is quite possible that he may have taught his followers the best lessons of religion and morality which were current in the atmosphere of thought which he breathed; and that he may even have greatly improved on them. But to attribute to any man the creation of an essentially new atmosphere of thought or feeling contradicts the laws of our mental development. Great revolutions can here only be effected by slow stages. The human Jesus was born a Jew, and his mental development must have been subject to all the conditions which the atmosphere in the midst of which he lived imposed on him.

If, therefore, a wide interval separates the tone of religion and morality exhibited in the Gospels from the condition of thought in which Jesus lived, it is impossible to attribute the sole creation of it to him exclusively. He may have improved on existing systems, or acted the part of a religious reformer, but others must have contributed their aid before the great ideal could have been elaborated.

We have already examined the conditions of thought under which the historical Jesus must have been born and educated. From their influences no amount of greatness merely human could have emancipated him.

His conceptions of religion and morality must have been founded on those of the Old Testament. Its teaching formed the fundamental groundwork of all existing ideas on those subjects. It imparted to the Jew his conceptions of the character of God, and of the obligations which bound man to God, and man to man. He must have contemplated its utterances with the profoundest reverence.

But as all developments are attended with retrogressions, the Jewish mind, while in some respects it had enlarged on the conceptions of the Old Testament, had already entered on those retrograde tendencies, compared with its ideal as we see it exhibited in the Psalmists and the Prophets, to which we have already called attention. The Jew had grown more intensely Jewish, national, and exclusive. The life of prophetic inspiration had become extinct. The Scribe had arisen in its place with his refinements of interpretation. Erudition was now the highest form of the Jewish mind, not creative thought. The religious life was gradually getting more hard and formal. Such was the condition of the national mind, in the midst of which Jesus was born and educated.

Its activity was displaying itself in its three great sects, Phariseeism, Sadduceeism, and Esseneism. The first of these exhibited the ritualistic, formal, and casuistic aspect of the religious life of the day; the second, its more sceptical aspect; the third, its asceticism and mysticism. The principles of one or more of these sects must have exerted a powerful influence on the human Jesus. It was impossible that he could have escaped from it, for they embraced within them all the currents of living thought. If he was a great man he may have thrown all his energies into one of these sects, and urged on its development at an accelerated ratio; or he may have contented himself, like Paul, with a zealous adhesion to the existing lines of thought. Or he may have constructed out of them an eclectic system of his own, and become the founder of another sect, bearing a definite relation to the other three.

There was also a more spiritual element of religion in existence, the remnant of the fire of the Psalmists and the Prophets. If Jesus was a great man, and came under its influences, he might have felt disgust at the existing tendencies of religious thought. In this case he would have been compelled to become a reformer like Luther. But all



reformers have some ideal in the past towards which they direct their eye. That of Luther was St. Augustine and St. Paul. That of Jesus must have been the Psalmists and the Prophets. His model of a great man must have been David, or Hezekiah, or Josiah, or more generally the heroes of his race and nation. Towards these models he must have endeavoured to recall the minds of his contemporaries and his own. We are ready to concede that of reformers he was King, and that he may have improved on the ideas of the past by his own reflections. But if he was a reformer, however great, he must have been bound by the conditions by which all other reformers have been bound, the environment of thought in the midst of which he was born and educated; from the influences of which he could have no more emancipated himself, than we can from those of the atmosphere which we breathe.

The supporters of the mythic theory are quite uncertain as to the degree in which the historic Jesus participated in the Messianic ideas of his time, or supposed that they were fulfilled in his own person. Most of them are of opinion that he did not begin his course as a public teacher by imagining himself to be the Messiah, and that if he did so at all, it was only during the latter portion of it.

Whatever might have been his Messianic pretensions, they must have borne a definite relation to those current in his day. It is quite possible that he may even have refined on them. Some have said that they were founded on the book of Enoch. This is incredible, if he was a great man. A man truly great could not under any impulse of enthusiasm have fallen into the delusion of attributing to himself the conception of the Messiah as it is exhibited in that book. If he had done so, he must have believed himself to be the Son of God and the Son of Man, to have existed before the creation, and to have exhibited the perfections of the Lord of Spirits in his own person. If the supporters of the mythic theory ask us to believe that Jesus was a really great man, they must not ask us to assume at the same time that he was pre-eminently little.

But however moderate may have been the Messianic pretensions of the historical Jesus, a multitude of enthusiastic followers may have been ready, within reasonable limits, to assign to him any Messianic pretensions with which they were acquainted. It has been said that he

may have encouraged them in doing so. But, if he were a great or a good man, this is impossible; least of all, under any impulse of enthusiasm, could he have lent himself to the fabrication of fictitious miracles for the purpose of surrounding himself with a halo of unreal glory.

If the maintainers of the mythic theory assume that Jesus was a great man, they must keep themselves within those limits within which human greatness is alone possible. He must have been great as a Jew who lived at the period of the Advent. Like as Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle were great as Greek philosophers, as Pericles and Alexander were great as politicians, as Æschylus and Sophocles were great as poets, or as Julius Cæsar or Cicero were great as Romans, so the historical Jesus must have been a great man, not in relation to the ideas and conceptions of the present age, but to those of the age in which he lived. To say that he was great in any other sense is to concede the point, that he was not human but divine.

But we must direct our attention not only to the greatness of the supposed historical Jesus, but to his goodness. This must have been equally relative to the times which produced him.

If Jesus was a mere man, however good, it is impossible that the moral and spiritual portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels can be a true delineation of that of the historic Jesus. It is not only elevated above that of any conceivable Jew of the period of the Advent, but above all good and holy men in every age.

It is impossible to assume that it is ideal in its Messianic portions, and actual only in its moral portraiture. Not only is the moral delineation of that elevated character which we have described, but it is indissolubly united with its Messianic aspect. The character, as we have seen it exhibited in the Gospels, not only involves a unity in its details, but forms a complicated whole. Its parts are related to the whole and to each other, its human to its superhuman aspect. If we take away its Messianic aspect, we do not reduce the character to a level with ordinary humanity, but it simply falls to pieces. It is impossible by any amount of subtraction from it, to manufacture out of it a merely human Jesus. In its moral and spiritual aspect, it admits of only

two solutions. It is either ideal, or it has come down from heaven.

M. Renan and others have painted an ideal conception of a human Jesus, and ascribed it to the Son of Joseph and Mary. Those portions of the character which do not square with their views, they pronounce mythical additions to the historical reality. But this proceeding is altogether arbitrary, and the character thus elaborated is no less mythical than that which is attempted to be superseded by it. Renan's Jesus would be an ideal one, if it were viewed as the portraiture of any historical man. The question at issue is, not what is a possible religion and morality for a good and holy man of the nineteenth century, but for a Jew who lived at the period of the Advent. The Jesus of Renan is not a pure or holy man of any age or country.

The historical Jesus, if he were a mere man, must have exhibited a morality not such as we in the present century think right, but such as was consistent with the times in which he lived. We have no right to select such portions of the morality in which the Evangelists have portrayed their Jesus as are agreeable to our notions, and assume that they formed the moral environment of a Jew who lived nearly nineteen hundred years ago. It is just as allowable to select certain approved principles of the present day and ascribe them to Abraham or to Adam. The venerable Howard was a man who laboured in the last century, and the principles of Christian life by which he was surrounded are sufficient to account for the existence of such a character. But if a Renan were to portray a similar character, and tell us that it was an historical reality of the age of the Peloponnesian war, we should require no reasoning to prove that it could have existed only in his own imagination. If the Gospels are not historical, the Jesus whom they portray and the Jesus of Renan are alike creations of the imagination.

We shall not dispute that the historical Jesus, if he were a mere man, was a very good and holy one for the age in which he lived ; but to that age his goodness and holiness must have borne a definite relation. A holy man, who has succeeded in divesting himself of the influences by which he has been surrounded, never yet existed. Many of the best men of bygone ages would be very indifferent men now.

What should we say of a man who in the present age would burn witches? but three centuries have not yet elapsed, since many good men would have concurred in doing so. The noblest of the men in former generations have committed without compunction acts which our present moral and religious enlightenment would pronounce atrocious crimes. All which they could do was to elevate themselves a little above the evil which surrounded them.

It is utterly unphilosophical, therefore, to apply the moral and religious tone of the present age to one which has long since passed away. The feelings, ideas, and prejudices of the age of Jesus must have reflected themselves in him. To admit that he was good in any other sense than this, is to concede that he was not human but divine. He may have been distinguished from his contemporaries by being a better man than they; but it must be in the same manner as Samuel, or David, or Marcus Aurelius, or Alfred were distinguished from the men of their age and generation.

We cannot therefore concede to the authors of the mythic theory the right to take our modern notions of religion and morality, which have been formed after centuries of Christian progress, and describe them as the environment of a Jew of the century of the Advent. The idea involves as great a breach of the laws of the moral and spiritual world as a miracle does of the physical.

In considering the truth of the mythic theory, it is of the highest importance that we should form a correct estimate of the influence which may have been exerted by the historic Jesus in the elaboration of the moral and spiritual aspects of the Gospels. In conformity with the laws of our mental constitution, he could only have effected a moderate improvement on the moral and spiritual idealization of the age in which he lived. We are not justified in attributing to him ideas beyond those which a Galilean peasant might have acquired, who had passed the whole of his life surrounded by Jewish influences. He had no doubt profoundly meditated on the Old Testament, and had drunk deeply of its religion and morality. He may have been acquainted with the Apocryphal books. It is even supposable that he was not a stranger to the subjects of discussion in the Jewish schools. He may have been a close student of nature and of man. But his idealization

must have been that of his countrymen, only somewhat elevated above them. If those among whom he lived, as the supporters of the mythic theory tell us, were very credulous, he could not have been wholly free from the influence of their credulity. If their morality was founded on self, the morality of Jesus could not have been entirely unselfish. If the ideal of a Jewish saint was that of the triumphant annihilator of the enemies of his God and his own, that of Jesus could not have been one of passive submission to suffering as the highest duty. If Jesus was nurtured in the midst of an atmosphere of sectarian nationality, he could not have elevated himself at a single bound to the conception of a universal brotherhood of mankind. He must have lived in the midst of ideas created by the limited civilization of Galilee. How was he to emancipate himself from their influence? We have been told that lofty genius can effect this by the study of nature and of man. Other great men have studied them profoundly and have never broken through the conditions imposed on them by their moral and spiritual environment. Let any other great man who has succeeded in accomplishing this be pointed out. Until this can be done, to assert that Jesus did it, because he was great and good, is to assume the point which ought to be proved. He might have been the first leader of the party of moral and religious progress. He might have been the great reformer of his day. But he must have been ignorant of that line of thought which the developments of man have made so familiar that many of its truths have assumed the character of axioms. We must also never forget, if we would form a correct estimate of the influence which the historical Jesus could have exerted, that he died in early manhood, before the judgment has attained all its ripeness on questions of moral and religious truth. This is a point which our opponents would do well to make the subject of earnest meditation. He had not only to invent Christianity out of Judaism, but to accomplish that great work which, by impressing it on the hearts of his followers, has effected the creation of the Christian Church.

We have no right, therefore, to separate the morality of the Gospels from the other subjects with which it is interwoven, and say that it is the morality of a human Jesus.



Still less can we attribute the moral aspect which is displayed in the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists to an actual man. A deep gulph separates it from the moral environment of the age which produced our Lord. Jesus, however great and good, could have only slightly elevated himself above it. If a miracle is impossible in the natural world, it is equally so in the moral world. To believe that any mere man, whose life was confined to the first thirty-four years of the first century of our era, created the religious and moral aspects of the Gospels, by his mere unassisted powers, out of the Judaism in which he was born and educated, involves as great a miracle as the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE JESUS OF THE GOSPELS NO MYTHICAL CREATION.

IN pursuing our argument we shall now assume the following points as proved :—

1. The right mode of portraying such a character as that of the Evangelical Jesus is open to so great a diversity of opinion, that prior to its elaboration no two persons would have conceived it, or dramatised it in a similar manner, not only in its great outlines but even in its minutest points.

2. As it is dramatised by the Evangelists, it presents us with a perfect unity of conception.

3. As the Gospels are said to consist of a congeries of mythic stories, that unity must have existed in the separate myths out of which they have been composed.

4. The diversities of the Gospels afford the strongest evidence that this unity could not have been imparted to them by their immediate authors.

5. The number of mythic or legendary stories floating in the Church must have been large, and their authors numerous.

6. The progress of the developments of our religious and moral conceptions is a very gradual one; and those

which have been historical have passed through a succession of stages.

7. The Jesus of history, if he were a mere man, must have been a great and good man in the same sense in which other men have been great and good, and in no other.

The believers in the mythic theory require us to believe that the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists has been elaborated out of the forms of Jewish thought and feeling such as we have described in the preceding pages, in conformity with the laws of the human mind, by a succession of mythical additions to the character of a Jew who lived at the period of the Advent, spread over the space of little more than two-thirds of a century. Is this conceivable?

The bare proof that the portraiture is a perfect unity is a sufficient answer to the assumption. A complicated unity cannot be evolved by means of a succession of mythological creations. We will proceed to point out the absurdities of the position.

In the four Evangelists we have four artists, each of whom, out of a number of mythic stories, undertook to portray and dramatise a Christ. On examination we find that each of these portraits is not that of a different Christ; but that they are four representations of one and the same Christ, taken from somewhat different points of view.

But this is not the whole of the marvel. Each portraiture consists of a number of mythic stories united into a whole by mere agglomeration. These stories were not separate delineations from which the Evangelists could have chosen the one which they thought to be the most perfect. They must have consisted of small fragments of such a character, one depicting this attribute and another that. The union of these must have created the Jesus of each Gospel; and the four Gospels are not the portraitures of four separate Christs, but of one only. Nor is this all. We are asked to believe that the elaborators of the myths preserved a substantial unity in portraying all the separate portions of our Lord's divine and human character, notwithstanding the difficulties involved in the theological and moral truths connected with them. Those who think

these things possible need not sneer at the credulity of those who believe in miracles.

We will illustrate the subject from the novel writer. We will suppose a considerable number of persons to be engaged in composing a novel which should dramatise in various aspects and situations a particular character, say, that of a great and holy man. They are to embody in it their own ideas of goodness and holiness. Would their delineations present any unity of character? Would they not create as many distinct characters as there were novelists?

But this hardly represents the case of the Evangelists. To do so we must suppose that each of the novel writers, instead of depicting an entire character, is engaged in attempting to delineate only a portion of one. Let the attempt be made to compose four complete portraitures out of these partial delineations. What would result therefrom? Not unity, but confusion.

We have already considered the state of the Jewish mind out of which the conception of the Christ must have originated, and in the midst of which it must have developed itself, on the principles of our opponents. Before proceeding with our argument we will briefly enumerate the materials which must have been in the hands of the followers of our Lord, on the morning following the crucifixion, when they commenced their labours of metamorphosing a human Jesus into the divine Christ.

1. They had the Jesus of history such as we have described him, who on the previous day had been crucified and buried.

2. The Messianic conceptions of the times in which he lived, and in which it is possible that he may have participated.

3. The Messianic conceptions of the Old Testament, and those of the Apocryphal books which date between the termination of the prophetic period and the Advent.

4. The religious and moral conceptions of the Old Testament as the ideal towards which they looked.

5. Such ideas as had succeeded in infusing themselves into the atmosphere of Judaism from the Gentile world.

6. The existing tendencies of Jewish thought and feeling as represented by the three great Sects, and which

were rapidly developing themselves in the direction of Rabbinism.

7. The various aspirations excited in the mind of the Jew by his religious and political condition, reacted on by his Messianic expectations.

8. The existing atmosphere of thought under the influences of which Jesus and his followers had been born and educated.

Such were the materials which the followers of Jesus had ready to their hands on the morning which followed the crucifixion, and out of which they have succeeded in creating the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists. How has this been accomplished?

The historic Jesus during his earthly career had surrounded himself with a crowd of enthusiastic but very credulous admirers. In the height of their enthusiasm, they formed a succession of creations of the imagination, and then ascribed them to their Master as historical realities. Myth followed myth, in which they gradually invested him with the various aspects of the Messianic character as they succeeded in elaborating it. Each succeeding myth must have been an improvement on that which preceded it, and have effected the solution of numbers of the most difficult problems in morals and theology with entire unanimity. One mythologist created a miracle, another put into his mouth a parable, a third invented a discourse. At last they boldly ventured to portray a divine and human consciousness united in his person, and to impart a divine aspect to the crucified Jesus.

In this manner the human Jesus grew into a heavenly form. The morality of the times became superseded by one of love. Out of the narrowest exclusiveness was evolved the most catholic spirit. The mythologists boldly went on creating detached portions of a character, the full conception of which as yet existed nowhere. Still the process of mythic manufacture advanced through the elastic powers of a young society. In time the myths could be numbered by hundreds if not by thousands.

At last it entered into the heads of some who mistook these fictions for facts to attempt to weave them into a whole, and out of them to set forth a life of Jesus in an historical form. This was frequently attempted, and with

various success. At length four persons succeeded in creating out of them four distinct portraits of a divine man. An extraordinary result followed, which, if true, proves that to mythologists all things are possible. When men came to survey these four portraits, they discovered that in the midst of some diversity of aspect, they formed four incontestable likenesses of the same person taken from four different points of view. The character thus delineated has been universally admitted to be the greatest which has ever been conceived by man, and to leave behind it every other, whether historical or ideal, at an infinite distance.

The foundation on which this mass of fiction has been erected is the historic life of Jesus, of whom we know next to nothing except that he was a great man, whom his followers considered to be the Messiah, and who was put to a cruel death by the rulers of his country. The crucifixion must have been the starting point of the new mythology. Prior to that event his presence among them must have prevented them from investing him with any large amount of mythical drapery.

It is important to observe that whatever Messianic ideas had been previously attributed to him by his followers, that of a suffering Messiah was certainly not among them. They could not have learned this from the book of Enoch. The Gospels tell us that they were utter strangers to any such conception; and whatever we may think of their historical value, it must be admitted that they here present us with a true tradition of the Christ. The Messianic conceptions of the times had entirely forgotten any hint of a suffering Messiah contained in the Old Testament.

The Messiah whom they had expected was to be a great King and Conqueror, and a liberator of his country from the detested yoke of foreigners. When they saw Jesus committed to his tomb, they could have entertained no doubt that that hope had perished. To suppose that it did not extinguish their delusions is almost to ask us to believe in a miracle.

If the belief in his Messiahship was to be maintained at all, it was necessary that new ground should be taken, and that too with little delay. Every hour that the infant



society was suffered to continue in its present state threatened it with dissolution. This new ground was taken, for the Church of which Jesus was the founder still exists. How was it that the belief in his Messiahship did not perish in his grave?

It was his peculiar good fortune to have been surrounded by a number of the most devoted adherents, whose enthusiasm was only equalled by their credulity. Notwithstanding his crucifixion, which defeated every one of their previous expectations, they were determined to believe in him as the Messiah. The happy thought occurred to somebody, it may have been to Mary Magdalene, that the disaster of the crucifixion could be remedied by a resurrection. If the followers of Jesus could be got to believe that he was risen from the dead there would open before them a great and glorious future, though his dead body was rotting in the grave. One or two of his followers, therefore, whose imagination had been kindled to the whitest heat of fanaticism, (shall we not mix up with it a little leaven of imposture?) imagined that they had seen him after his burial, and succeeded in course of time in persuading a considerable number, to whose minds no such visions could have presented themselves, that he was risen from the dead. Such is the account which those who assert that the Christ of the Gospels has been developed out of a crucified Jesus ask us to believe of the first origin of the movement. It is difficult to conceive any thing more incredible.

It is evident that some event which has been capable of supporting the whole weight of the Christian Church must have taken place within a few days after the crucifixion. The actual resurrection of Jesus would have been a sufficient historical basis on which it could be erected. This the believers in the mythic theory pronounce to be impossible to have happened as a fact. It was necessary, therefore, that it should have been invented as a fiction; and the followers of Jesus induced to believe in it as a fact. Such an invention would have been much easier after the lapse of years. A considerable interval of time would have afforded the opportunity for the impressions of the crucifixion to have grown faint. But if our opponents concede a period of years for the elaboration of this fiction, then

will greatly exhaust the time at their command for the creation of the conception of the Christ. In addition to this, while the belief is being created, the Church is perishing.

It would not have been difficult for one of our Lord's followers to think that he had seen the spirit of Jesus. But this was not the thing wanted. What the Church stood in urgent need of, was not the apparition of a departed spirit, but a living Messiah. Even in the days of spirit-rapping, it would be no easy matter to idealize the conception of a divine and human Christ on the foundation of a ghost. It is not difficult to persuade a number of people into the belief of the apparition of a spirit; but to imagine that a man has been seen alive within a few days after he had been actually put to death and committed to the grave, must be acknowledged not to be easy even for those who cannot distinguish between the impressions of their own minds and external realities.

But unless a number of the followers of Jesus could have been induced to believe in the resurrection of their Master, the creation of an ideal Christ would have been impossible. It is easy to say, that some one or two who fancied that they had seen him after his crucifixion, communicated their enthusiasm to the rest, and to suppose that the whole body of the disciples were possessed of a boundless credulity. But the question is, how could this have been effected in anything like a reasonable time. Time is the great desideratum for the mythic theory. On its own showing, it has only sixty-seven years in which to create the Christ of the Synoptics, and we shall reduce that period to less than twenty.

Aware of the difficulty, some have attempted to evade it, by supposing that the historical Jesus never died at all. The wounds inflicted by crucifixion were not mortal. He was only in a swoon when he was buried. He managed to creep out of his grave, and his disciples believed that it was an actual resurrection.

But if Jesus in an exhausted state had succeeded in creeping from his tomb, and died shortly after, this was no possible foundation on which to erect an ideal Messiahship, even if his followers had been lunatics. The cure of a crucified man, though possible, was not easy; and this would

have been rendered impossible by a long continuance in the grave. But if he had recovered, he must have lived under the observation of their senses, and thus it would have been impossible for him to have grown into an ideal Christ. If it was necessary that he should have lived in retirement, to escape the malice of his enemies, his friends must have had the opportunity of private intercourse with him. Whichever alternative may be accepted, those who think that it is possible to metamorphose a wounded man, just able to creep from his grave, into the Jesus of the Evangelists, must be more credulous than the mythologists themselves.

However ruinous it may be to the mythic theory to concede a considerable interval of time for the elaboration of the legend of the resurrection, it must nevertheless be granted, or it is impossible to impart to it even the semblance of probability. It is evident that, if possible at all, it must have been a work of time, and that several years must have elapsed before any considerable number of the disciples of Jesus could have been induced to acquiesce in it. A less period would not have sufficed for smoothing over the difficulties and answering the objections which were certain to arise, when many persons were invited to believe that a dead friend had returned to life, and yet never condescended to allow them access to his person.

However incredible any of these suppositions may be as to the origin of the belief in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, let us now suppose for the sake of the argument that it has become the belief of the followers of our Lord, and that the Church has been constituted on it as a foundation. Still we have only yet succeeded in developing a single myth, and its creation has occupied a considerable portion of the time at the command of our opponents. But the Church is now got into working order, and the question must have forced itself on their attention, what must be done with the risen, but absent Jesus.

It was impossible to go on in the old lines of thought. The old Messianic conceptions required modification. The most obvious idea was to represent Jesus as only withdrawn from view for a time, and as speedily coming again to establish his Messianic claims. Accordingly, the supporters of the mythic theory are never weary of telling us that the Apostles and early Christians were intense believers in the

speedy return of their Master, and that this almost constituted the primitive Gospel.

Such a belief is very possible, but it would have left the Church in a state of complete stagnation. It contained in it not one element of growth, and as long as it continued the creation of the idea of the Jesus of the Evangelists was impossible. The expectation of his advent as a purely Jewish Messiah would have satisfied the Church until they were tired of waiting for his return. The nature of modern expectations of our Lord's impending advent proves, that if his followers had taken up with this belief, it would have been long before the lapse of time would have convinced them of its baseless character. But as long as it lasted no Evangelical Christ could have been created by the mythologists. The longer such a state of thought continued, the greater is the exhaustion of the interval of time which authentic history consents to place at the disposal of the supporters of the mythic theory.

We must assume, therefore, that the Messianic conception had taken a fresh start. In what direction shall a set of Jewish mythologists move? If they had the book of Enoch before them, it would have been a considerable aid; though, if they adopted the Messianic conceptions of this book as a model for their risen Messiah, it must have afforded them the utmost difficulty as to what they were to do with his sufferings and death, for the Messiah of that book is arrayed in nothing but glory. In this respect the embarrassment which it must have caused them, would have been nearly equal to the assistance it could have given them. But if they had no external aid, the monotheistic Jew must have struggled long before he could have conceived the idea of investing the Jesus whom he had once known as a friend with the attributes of the Son of God and the Son of Man.

It is evident that the greatest danger must have arisen, that the infant Church would be rent with divisions as soon as it proceeded to invent a new Messianic conception and assign it to Jesus. What was it to be? This question must have received a multitude of answers. The Jewish monotheism of the majority must have struggled hard against the new ideas which would assign a divine character to a man. Unless we suppose the mythologists to have

differed from all the men who ever existed, factions must have burst out and created myths of a very varied type. Even with the book of Enoch before them, such contests were inevitable. How could they be induced to believe that one whom they had known only as a human teacher was the Messiah of that book, who had existed before the Universe, and who was only just subordinate to the supreme God.

Such developments of belief are very slow in their progress. The fact is, history presents us with no other instance of the deification of one who had been publicly executed, and therefore we are only able to reason on the point by the aid of imperfect analogies.

The growth of Mormonism affords perhaps the nearest analogy to the creation of the mythic Christianity of our opponents with which authentic history can supply us. But the interval which separates the one from the other is profound. The Mormonite delusion originated in the full blaze of Christian light. It had the conceptions of the Old Testament and the New wherewith to work, and the whole range of modern literature and science. Yet its prophet, we will not say its Messiah, is a being invested with the attributes of Joe Smith. His followers have made slow progress in investing him with the attributes of the Son of God and the Son of Man. It will be long ere his glories cause those of the divine man to grow pale. Mormonism is unquestionably a fair specimen of a mythic religion generated in an historical age. The bare mention of the possible parallel is a sufficient exposure of its absurdity.

The Jewish monotheism took many a long century to grow in. Is it likely that a belief would readily spring up among the followers of Jesus, that one whom they had known only as a man was the most exalted being in the Universe, and possessed attributes almost if not entirely divine? Physical speculators stand in a far more favourable position for imparting to their theories an appearance of probability. If they wish to develope a man out of an ape or even a piece of sponge, an interval of one hundred million years may easily be conceded to them; or, if necessary, the period may be multiplied indefinitely. But the delay of a few years in the elaboration of an ideal Jesus is fatal to the operations of the mythologists. The



laws of mind sternly declare that the intervals of time necessary for moral and religious developments are considerable. They can only be effected by successive fusions; and fusions require years for their accomplishment.

Every advancing stage must have involved them in additional difficulties. More and more divergent must have grown the different mythical creations. Unanimity could only have been preserved by adhering to the old lines of thought. How was the suffering Jesus to be invested with the divine aspects of the Messianic character? The points involved must have deeply affected the prejudices of the Jew. A fusion may be effected among philosophical systems. But how can it be brought about among religious partisans? The history of churches and sects is different from that of schools of philosophic thought. They stand out in prolonged antagonism to each other, and when one has incorporated the religious opinions of another, it has only been effected after long intervals of time. Judging from the analogy of kindred movements, it would have required the entire interval which the mythic theory has at its command, before the Christian Church could have arrived at the conclusion that the Messianic conceptions of the book of Enoch were the suitable ones in conformity with which the human Jesus was to be changed into the divine Christ.

Let us now assume, for the sake of our argument, that the mythologists of the Church have arrived at the conclusion, that the proper portraiture with which to invest the historic Jesus is that of a divine and human Christ. The work will be from henceforth a definite one, to invent a mythology which shall exhibit him as invested with a succession of attributes, and assign to him a religion and a morality worthy of one who united in his own person the character of the Son of God and of the Son of Man. Let us inquire into its possibility.

How was the union to be effected? What are the appropriate divine attributes of the Son of God? What are the human virtues which ought to form the character of the perfect Son of Man, and in what proportions are the two to be combined? How are the divine and human characters to be portrayed in unison in the same person? These are questions, which a body of Jews

educated in the moral and spiritual atmosphere which we have described, would not have answered speedily or unanimously. The book of Enoch would not have afforded a hint to aid them in their labours.

There is a widespread opinion that the delineation of such a character is a very easy undertaking, and that the principles on which it ought to be based are obvious enough. Those who entertain this opinion are too ready to forget that this divine character of Jesus has been exhibited before the eyes of men for more than eighteen centuries, and that it has illuminated with its divine light every department of human thought. We are thoroughly acquainted with it, and this is the reason why it seems to us to be the obvious solution of the problem we are considering. The rays of light which have issued from it have elevated the whole moral and spiritual idealization of man. It seems to us the natural solution of every problem in religion and morality.

But the state of things was wholly different before the portraiture of the Evangelical Jesus was brought into existence. To form an estimate of the greatness of the work which has been accomplished we ought to be able to do what it is impossible for us to effect, viz., to place ourselves in the position of a Jew who had nothing else to guide him but the points which we have previously enumerated, and to obliterate from our minds every ray of light which the divine Christ has communicated to Christendom.

What was that position? What were the only models to which a mythologist could direct his eye to assist him in delineating one who was to be the worthy representation of the character of the Son of God and the Son of Man? We will recapitulate them briefly.

His ideal of human greatness and perfection was the Jewish national hero, or a theocratic King. That of the divine character, the Old Testament delineations of God. That of the nearest point of union between God and man, the state of prophetic inspiration. That of a holy sufferer, "the Lord look on it and requite it." That of a patriot, one who would trample alien races under his feet. His actual morality was the state of feeling in which he lived; his ideal of it, that of the Psalmists and the Prophets. The

Pharisee was the popular religionist of his day : if he went further he could copy the Sadducee, the Essene, or some erudite Rabbi with all his refinements of interpretation. He could raise himself to the conceptions of the Old Testament or the Apocryphal books : but if he went further he was compelled to draw on the unassisted powers of his own mind. To this the supporters of the mythic theory add the unknown powers of spontaneous impulse, and a boundless enthusiasm. These were no doubt valuable qualities to assist the mythologist in his work. They kindle into a flame the powers of the imagination. To these they add an equally boundless credulity. But although this is a valuable one to assist in the creation of the miraculous element of the Gospels, it is a very questionable qualification to aid in the elaboration of either their religion or their morality. It is alike the teaching of philosophy and history that men who are deeply imbued with this spirit are incapable of a high order of morality. Before an elevated moral or spiritual tone is possible the dark clouds of superstition must be expelled from the intellect. Still more necessary is this as a pre-condition of moral progress. The presence of this degree of superstition would be as great a hindrance to them in the creation of the religious and moral aspects of the Jesus of the Evangelists as it would have aided them in inventing the miraculous elements.

What must have been the result of the labours of mythologists in their attempts to dramatise this conception ? The production of a number of delineations of the utmost diversity of type. One Christ would be portrayed with one character and one with another, and all would be attributed to Jesus. One would invest him with the sterner aspects of Godhead ; another with the milder. Equally incongruous would be the delineations of his human character. Do not all the efforts of philosophers, poets, and theologians tell us, that it is impossible for differently constituted minds to agree on such subjects ? Would Plato or Aristotle, if they had discussed the subject for centuries, have drawn the same representation of an ideal great man ? How much is the difficulty increased when the problem becomes complicated by the introduction of almost every conceivable question divine or human.

But what must be done since the mythologists by their

efforts have only succeeded in flooding the Church with a multitude of imperfect Christs of the utmost diversity of moral and spiritual aspect? Will one party at once renounce its views in favour of another? This is not to be hoped for, unless theologians and moralists of the mythic ages were composed of very different materials from those of the present. If it is pretended that the power of instinctive impulse would have led the mythologists to unity, this is only to assume the existence of another form of inspiration. The Church is threatened with disruption. Each party adopts a different model of a Christ, and yet the Jesus of the Evangelists is hardly portrayed in his faintest outlines. How is this difficulty to be overcome?

The believers in the mythic theory can only give one answer, and that is a very ruinous one to their cause, and the more so, the wider the Christian Church had spread. The aid of time must be invoked, by means of which all these divergencies of conception can get fused together, and out of them will at length emerge a unity. This, however, is far from being certain, for theological controversies differ greatly in their intensity from philosophical ones. Even divergent philosophical systems, with the most liberal allowance of time, have been far from always coalescing or uniting. But whenever an eclectic system has arisen out of a number of diverse speculations, its elaboration has required a longer interval of time than the mythic theory has at its command for the creation of the entire religion and morality of the Gospels.

The ancient mythologies will throw light on the degree in which mythical development is possible. We will select as an example the Homeric poems. It will not be necessary to go into the vexed question of their authorship. Whether they are the work of one or of many minds is immaterial to our argument. Either way they must have originated in a number of previously existing mythological creations. The theology, the morality, the heroic character must have existed beforehand. The mythologists had no occasion to exercise their creative powers in inventing them. In this they had an immeasurable advantage over the creators of the Gospels. The limits within which the poet could have been a creator are distinctly marked out. It is evident that he adopted the religion, the morality, and the manners

of the times. He did not create them. All that he has invented are the circumstances under which he has delineated them. The different heroes are idealizations of the recognized heroic type of character. Amidst a considerable degree of diversity, they present a certain amount of unity. What is the source of this unity? A close adhesion to the idealization of the day. But their diversity is no less clear and distinct. They are embodiments of the Greek conception of the heroic character, as conceived of in different minds, and surveyed in different situations. All that the poet has done is to idealize them. We see at once that no amount of mythological development would ever have succeeded in creating out of these different characters the abstract conception of a Greek hero, in the same manner as the Evangelists are alleged to have framed out of the different mythical Christs that of a perfect man, and exhibited him in their Jesus.

It must be observed that while the Christian mythologists had an endless variety of religious and moral problems, which required to be solved before the smallest progress could be made in forming the conception of a divine and human Christ, the Greek ones were entirely free from this embarrassment. They portrayed in their heroes the religion and morality of the times without attempting to create them anew. An Achilles, an Agamemnon, an Ajax, or a Ulysses, constitute as many dramatised representations of an heroic King. They are arrayed in the recognized morality. The poets found the groundwork of their creations in the living heroes of their day. Their Gods were those of their race and nation. They are invested with all the passions of humanity. They are simply heroes armed with superhuman power. Their wisdom and morality is no improvement on that which is ascribed to men. The whole uniformity of type which they present is preserved by closely adhering to the idealization of the times. A similar condition is observed throughout the whole range of fictitious literature. It pervades the whole of the mythical creations of the ancient world. All the labours of subsequent poets produced no improvements in the ideal conceptions of mythology. It is impossible to conceive two things more unlike than the mythical creations of the ancient world, and the alleged mythology of the Gospels.



But if a revolution in thought had broken out among the creators of the ancient myths as to what constituted the true type of the heroic character; or if they had attempted to effect improvements in the idealization of the times; if they had tried to introduce a new theology or morality, or to subvert the established standards of belief, the whole of the uniformity of the mythical creations must have disappeared. Each mythologist must have created myths as widely differing in conception as the mental character of their authors.

What would be the effect produced on the light literature of the day if a great revolution were to break out in our moral, religious, and social conceptions? The class of novel writers in some respects occupy the place of the ancient mythologist. All their creations bear a definite relation to existing types of thought. They do not create new moral or religious ideas, but they work up those which are current in society. Their ideal characters, as far as they bear the impress of this, present a certain analogy to each other. But who would ever dream that by any amount of fusion they could create a unity, or the conception of a perfect man. If a ferment broke out in society, and our existing modes of thought became the subjects of violent change, or our whole moral and religious ideas were to be suddenly subverted, this species of literature would present us with creations of the most divergent type, out of which it would be impossible to evolve a unity. Different minds would become partisans of different lines of thought, and their creations would cease to bear the impress of similarity of character.

In the same manner, as modifications took place in the minds of the Christian mythologists as to what constituted the proper conception of the Messiah, and the old conceptions no longer supplied them with a model, they must have produced delineations of it of the utmost variety of aspect. A similarity of character could only have been preserved as long as they adhered to the old lines of thought. The conception of a Messiah embodying the ideas of the times need not have involved a greater diversity of portraiture than we see exhibited in an Achilles or an Agamemnon. But when the spirit of innovation had once entered the Church, it is evident that the production of even this amount of identity of character was no longer

possible. Every fresh innovation must have made the different mythical creations more and more divergent from each other.

This diversity must have gone on increasing in proportion as the conception of the Messianic character became more and more elevated; and an unceasing battle must have taken place in the Church between the adherents of the new and the old opinions. The only mode of obtaining a unity is to suppose, contrary to all probability, that these divergent lines of thought ultimately fused together. But all the real fusions of thought of which history furnishes us examples, have been effected only after very considerable intervals of time. The spirit of enthusiasm which the supporters of the mythic theory are compelled to assign to the primitive Christians is most adverse to their speedy accomplishment. It must die out before they are possible. If we ask for such an interval as the historical conditions of the case require, we shall exhaust all the time at the command of the mythologists. Yet it will be necessary to postulate an equal interval at every advancing stage of the development.

We have seen that when the mythologists undertook to portray the character of one who was the Son of God and the Son of Man, the problems which must have presented themselves to their minds as to the mode in which it ought to be dramatised, not only were very numerous, but admitted of an indefinite number of solutions. Was holiness, or justice, or benevolence, to be the predominant attribute in such a character? Every different order of mind would have determined this question in conformity with its own peculiar conformation. The proportion also in which these various attributes should be blended together, must have been determined differently by men of diverse mental constitutions. There is no definite test by which such questions can be settled. Similar must have been the disagreement as to what were the human qualities which should be dramatised in his person. Were they to be the heroic or the mild, the unobtrusive or the grand? If they ought to unite these opposite poles of moral character in the same person, how was that union to be accomplished? If such complicated questions are

capable of solution at all by a body of credulous mythologists, it is impossible to calculate the time necessary for its accomplishment.

But the difficulties of the believers in the unhistorical character of the Gospels are greatly increased by an assumption which the necessities of their position force on them, the existence of numerous parties in the primitive Church animated by feelings of no little bitterness towards each other. Party spirit is productive of activity of thought, but it renders fusions proportionately difficult. There were in the Church at least the Nazarene, the Petrine, the Pauline, the Oriental, and the Johannean party, and on their principles there must have been many more. The members of them were religious partisans, not intellectual speculators. Each party must have had its typical Jesus. Under what influences and after what interval of time could they have succeeded in fusing their different conceptions of a mythic Jesus into a common Christ? If we suppose that they effected it, how near did their creation approximate to him of the Gospels?

We are not propounding theories, but stating facts, when we assert that each party in the Church must have created a mythic Jesus who was the embodiment of its own conceptions. The existence of those different parties in the Church is a theory of our opponents, but that of the Gnostic sect is a fact of history. These unquestionably created a Jesus of a portraiture very divergent from the Jesus of the Evangelists. Their speculations involved the whole question of the origin of evil. They placed it in the existence of what is material. Sin with them had changed its aspect. It was not the fault of man, but the misfortune of his condition. If man's spirit could be freed from the incubus of its material environment, there was nothing to hinder its union with the Godhead. To these views the Christian doctrine of the incarnation stood in hopeless opposition. That a Divine being should take a material body into union with himself was a contradiction. No less opposed to their views was the doctrine of a bodily resurrection. Each Gnostic sect, therefore, endeavoured to escape from these difficulties by assigning a different portraiture to the person of the Christ. Nothing could be

more offensive to them, than the idea of a suffering Messiah. They, therefore, separated the human person of Jesus from the divine Christ, or reduced his human character to a phantom. His sufferings on the cross were only apparent. Another theory was that the divine Christ, who had previously united himself to the human Jesus, and had used him as his instrument, deserted him in his hour of need, and by a questionable morality, left him to expire on the cross. Such was the actual mythology of the second century. We ask whether it is an improvement on that of the Evangelists?

We answer that it must have been a development on the mythology of the first century, if, as our opponents assert, the Gospels are unhistorical. But whether the Gospels be real or mythical, there can be no doubt that the Gnostic Christ is a mythical creation. As such, it is valuable, as showing the tendencies of the mythic movement. In the second century that tendency was unquestionably a retrograde one. What right have we to assume that in the first century it must always have taken the direction of progress, when the first time we can detect it within the range of certain history, the movement was in an opposite direction? No other reason can be given for this than that it is essential to the position taken by our opponents that it should be so, and that without it, the mythic theory cannot be made to assume even the semblance of possibility.

But we will bring the question to a definite issue by examining special aspects of the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists. Let us suppose that a body of mythologists were engaged in attempting to dramatise the union of a divine and human consciousness in the person of a Christ with a view of attributing it to Jesus. We have already pointed out the nature of the various problems involved in such an attempt. How various are the modes in which they must have portrayed that consciousness! How various the words which they must have put into our Lord's mouth as expressions of it; and how multiform the aspects of character in which they must have attempted to embody it! Is it conceivable that all the different portraits of a Christ should have depicted him in the attitude of calm repose; or that Jews not unfrequently accustomed to representations of overwhelming prophetic illapse, should

have depicted their divine man as an utter stranger to it? Is it again conceivable that different minds, animated by the spirit of exclusiveness, under no other influence than that of impulse, should have depicted a character uniting grandeur with humility in the proportions which they uniformly bear in the Jesus of the Evangelists? Was it not inevitable that in dramatising such a character, a multitude of minds must have created legends exhibiting every variety of aspect, when they were destitute of a model for their guidance? In investing Deity with the attributes of humanity, would it have been possible for them to have agreed as to the virtues of human nature in which their creation should be arrayed, or would they have arrived at the conclusion, contrary to all existing ideas, that he ought to be arrayed in the milder in preference to the more heroic forms of human virtue? Is it conceivable that all the mythologists, acting under no other guide than that of impulse, should have concurred in dramatising displays of character which are utterly devoid of a single reference to self as an impelling motive? It is equally possible to conceive that St. Paul's Cathedral has been erected by a multitude of workmen who were unconsciously impelled to place together stones of various shapes and sizes without the oversight of a directing mind.

The complete unity which this portion of the portraiture of our Lord exhibits in the Gospels we have already considered, and also the perfection with which it has been conceived and dramatised. We have also pointed out that the conception, as it is there evolved, runs counter to all the existing models with which the mythologists were acquainted. How is it possible that it could have been evolved out of a human Jesus by any conceivable action of the mythic theory? If it has been effected by the power of spontaneous impulse, it must be a supernatural form of agency independent of the laws of mind which are recognised by mental science. But if it be answered, that although such things could not have been accomplished at once, the only thing requisite is a succession of developments and fusions of opposite and conflicting lines of thought, the time for effecting them is entirely wanting.

But even if impossibilities are conceded as possible, we are still at a remote distance from the creation of the con-



ception of the Jesus of the Evangelists. If the union of a divine and human consciousness in the person of a Christ be a partial realization of that of the Messiah of the book of Enoch, let it be remembered that that Messiah is invested with nothing but glory, and that the human Jesus, who is to be invested with this character, was the subject of humiliation and of death. The conception of any Messiah which ever entered into the mind of a Jew in the age of Jesus was that of a glorious one. How was the piece of new cloth to be made to agree with the old garment, or the new wine to be put into the old bottles without splitting them?

It was necessary, therefore, that the historic facts of the life of Jesus should be modified to meet the necessities of the case. A divine aspect must be imparted to them, and the requisite portraiture invented and attributed to the son of Joseph and Mary. As the supporters of the mythic theory have postulated for his followers an unbounded credulity, there would have been no great difficulty in getting them to believe that any modification of them was a representation of the real facts of his human life. Still it would have been no easy matter to persuade them that the Son of God, the King Messiah, could have united to his character that of a lowly sufferer.

The following is the position in which the mythologists must have found themselves. It was necessary to metamorphose a crucified man into the Son of God, and at the same time to invest him with all the affections of the perfect Son of Man. Could this have been accomplished, if he had been represented as having died an ordinary martyr's death? The mythologists have truly answered no, and yet, in process of time, they elaborated the Jesus of the Gospels as the adequate solution of the problem!

We have already observed, that if the Christ of the Evangelists is not the historic Jesus, the portraiture of the passion must be to a considerable extent an ideal creation. No mere man ever died as he died, not even since he has been exhibited as the great model of a perfect death. Previously to the time of our Lord the idea of such a death was remote from human thought. We have already pointed out the difficulties in the way of elaborating the portraiture, and the perfection with which it has been conceived.

But the elaboration of such a conception was against the very grain of Jewish thought. How could a Jew invest a crucified man with divine attributes; or if some fanatic follower of Jesus conceived the idea, what chance was there that the infant Church would not have perished under the burden of it?

The determination of the right mode of solving the problem must have led to infinite diversities of opinion among the mythologists. How could sufferings be conceived and dramatised so as to have a divine aspect imparted to them? If divine, how were they to retain a human character? None of the creations of the mythologists was more difficult, yet none has been more successful; for by means of their final drama they have made the human Jesus the Lord of the dead and living.

The divine aspect is imparted to the character by representing his sufferings as undergone as a purely voluntary act. They are submitted to in conformity with the will of God for the benefit of man. The sufferer could at any moment have freed himself from them; yet he will not, but exhausts everything which he is destined to undergo with absolute submission. Throughout the scene the divine never absorbs the human nor the human the divine. Throughout the whole scene the human virtues continue in their liveliest exercise, and the divine consciousness continues unextinguished.

It is evident that as soon as the mythologists set themselves to the task of creating the conception of an idealized sufferer for the purpose of assigning it to a human Jesus, it was quite impossible that these creations should exhibit a unity of portraiture. One must have invented a myth opposed to that delineated by another. One of the most remarkable features in the evangelical delineation is the preservation of the nicest balance of a higher and a lower will as exhibited in the person of our Lord. It is impossible that this could have been hit by a number of mythologists. Nothing is more suited to impress on us the difficulties in which this portion of the subject is involved than the immense divergency of opinion which has arisen among theologians, whenever they have left the simple account of the Evangelists and plunged into the vortex of speculation. The theories which

may be propounded are not only indefinite but infinite. But prior to the elaboration of the conception of the suffering Jesus, these were the difficulties into which mythologists must inevitably have fallen.

Notwithstanding the multitude of solutions connected with the mode in which a divine and human sufferer ought to have been dramatised, our Gospels afford the most unquestionable evidence that the mythologists who have imparted its present colouring to the story of the death of Jesus, must have arrived at a unanimity as to the right mode of its solution.

Although the details vary, the aspect of the sufferer under the sufferings is identically the same. Even the period of fifty years which, according to our opponents, separates the Gospel of St. John from the Synoptics, does not show that any modification of view had taken place during the interval. The only different theory respecting them which ever existed in the Church was a simple denial of their reality.

But great revolutions both in religious and moral conception must have taken place before the elaboration of this portion of the Messianic character of Jesus could have become a possibility. When the mythologists dramatised the dying Jesus as praying for his enemies, when they represented him while sinking under tortures, as animated by the most unquenchable philanthropy, they conceived what had never entered into the heart of man before. How wide is the interval which separates this from every previous state of thought and feeling! how different from the ideals which they had been accustomed to contemplate with the profoundest reverence! Yet no perfection which is divine, or feeling which is human, is absent from the conception.

The maintainers of the mythic theory require concessions which history and philosophy will alike refuse to grant. They assume that changes must have taken place in the moral and religious conceptions of the followers of Jesus with a rapidity which is inconsistent with the laws of our mental developments. They take it for granted that numbers of mythologists of great diversities of character can produce myths of the same type, or that a unity can be evolved out of divergent conceptions by the process of fusion. They admit the existence of different parties in

the Church who took widely different views of Christianity, and then assume that their different Messianic conceptions ultimately assumed a common character. Various complicated problems must have presented themselves which required solution before any progress in their work was possible. Yet the mythic theory asks us to believe that these questions were all ultimately solved by minds variously constituted, on precisely the same principles, and that this has been effected by the power of spontaneous impulse acting on the minds of credulous men. We are further asked to believe that each successive mythical creation advanced to a purer conception of religion and morality than that which preceded it, and that the various changes were always progressions in the direction of what is good, and never retrogressions. To believe in the possibility of many of these things involves the denial that the developments of mind are regulated by law. Others would have required long intervals of time for their accomplishment. But they ask us to believe that the whole has been effected in two-thirds of a century. Let them show us one single moral or religious development in the history of man which has been effected in an equal time. The subsequent developments of Christianity have taken centuries for their accomplishment, yet their extent is inconsiderable compared with the interval which separates Christianity and Judaism.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE MORAL ASPECT OF OUR LORD'S CHARACTER AND HISTORICAL REALITY.

THIS aspect of the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists is so important as to require a separate consideration. It consists of two distinct portions, which are yet closely interwoven in the Gospels—the moral aspect of the character of Christ, and the system of morality which they have attributed to him as a teacher of mankind. We have already considered the bounds within which the moral greatness of Jesus must have been limited, on the supposition that he was a purely human teacher. We

shall now show that the moral aspect of the Gospels is only consistent with the supposition that the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists is an historical reality.

If it be not so, the only alternative which it presents is that it is an ideal conception, which has been falsely attributed to a Jew who was born and educated in the religious and moral atmosphere of the period of the Advent. What then was its starting point?

The Jewish conception of holiness. This, as we have seen, was one of the harsher and sterner kind. That such also was the general idea of it in the ancient world is borne witness to by the universal voice of history. Its holy man assumed towards evil the aspect of stern severity. It was a world, both in sentiment and in action, utterly unlike that towards which the modern philanthropist would represent man as progressing by the general tendencies of things, and which Christianity has partially succeeded in realizing. It had no hospitals, no benevolent institutions for the reformation of criminals or of the notoriously profligate. The man who would have gone about from place to place expending himself in efforts to benefit the miserable and the wretched would have been esteemed the Don Quixote of the ancient world, or a still greater unreality. Taking ancient morality generally, no principle exerted a weaker influence than that of benevolence; no virtues were less prized than the mild and unobtrusive ones. Its ideal of perfection was not the meek, kind, merciful man, but the hero. We cannot better describe the revolution which our Lord has effected in the moral and spiritual world than by saying, that those virtues which the ancient world esteemed first he has made last, and the last first. He has exhibited this aspect of holiness in his own person, and taught it as the great teacher of mankind.

But if the mythologists wished to elevate themselves to a higher standard of holiness than the forms in the midst of which they lived, what was the ideal which they had to contemplate? The answer must be, that of the Psalmists and the Prophets. But there was one character to which their eyes would be especially directed in their endeavours to create a moral and spiritual portraiture worthy of the Messiah. David must have constituted the ideal of a great theocratic King. A large number of the Messianic pro-



phesies had portrayed the Messiah as the antitype of which David was the type. His moral portraiture was clearly set forth in the historical books. Why did they not attribute it to Jesus?

But between the characters of the Son of Jesse and the Son of Man, the contrast is very striking. David was a hero. Jesus is meek and lowly in heart. David was a man of blood. Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. If we compare together the accounts of the death of Jesus and that of the Son of Jesse, we shall form some idea of the interval which separates their moral and spiritual environment. The one charged his son to exact that vengeance upon his foes, which either fear or policy had restrained him from taking himself. The other, with all power in his hands, prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

If any trust can be given to the statements of the New Testament, the old morality of Judaism was deeply ingrained in the minds of our Lord's disciples. They were utterly unable to comprehend the mild and merciful spirit of their Master. He is represented as telling them that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of, when they proposed to imitate the example set them by the greatest of the prophets. Instead of allowing vengeance to be taken for an insult, he quietly sets out for another village. The old state of feeling must have animated the original mythologist.

The interval which separates the moral aspect of the Jesus of the Gospels from everything which preceded him is profound. The breadth of its holiness and benevolence is so great that it is impossible to do it justice by any delineation. It is complete in all its parts, and in every detail. To assume that any amount of genius could have passed at a single bound from the previous forms of thought to such a conception is to take up a position which contradicts the laws of the human mind. We have already proved that of all the developments of the mind those of its moral conceptions are the slowest.

It follows therefore that the first creations of Christian mythology could only have ascribed to Jesus the highest form of the moral environment in which they originated, or depicted him as invested with the character of an Old

Testament saint. But between these and the moral aspect of the Jesus of the Evangelists there exists the most evident contrast. How was the interval to be bridged over? Under what influences was the admiration of the heroic type of character superseded in the minds of the mythologists, and the ideal of the benevolent, holy, meek, and humble Jesus enthroned in its place?

It is necessary to assume that great changes must have taken place in their moral and spiritual idealization. But it is impossible to conceive of any influence sufficiently powerful to effect them. Where, in the whole course of history, is to be found an instance of men having suddenly changed their views as to the qualities which constitute the ideal of a great and holy character? No external influence could have been brought to bear on the followers of our Lord, unless it was a supernatural one; but this the mythic theory forbids us to assume, while at the same time it postulates the existence of one still more incomprehensible, a power of spontaneous impulse acting on the minds of numbers of mythologists. Such changes could only be brought about, in accordance with the laws which regulate our moral developments, after the lapse of centuries of progress.

Multitudes of questions must have required a solution before the conception of the moral aspects of the Jesus of the Evangelists was possible. Is it to be believed, that moral questions, on which the greatest minds have disagreed, could have been solved in the same way by mythologists? It is an unquestionable fact that the Evangelists have elevated the more unobtrusive virtues to the highest throne in their spiritual temple. It is no less certain that the state of feeling in the ancient world was the opposite to this. How was the change accomplished? Could they throw off their moral environment as easily as they could their garments? If we are to esteem this possible we are invited, in the name of philosophy, to renounce common sense.

But the mythologists had to encounter another most serious obstacle, the gradual enlargement of the Christian Church. Our opponents will not deny that during the seventy years which immediately followed the crucifixion, Christianity spread over a considerable geographical area. The Church consisted of a multitude of societies. Did the

mythological spirit break out in each of these separate churches? If so, was the same unity of type preserved in churches which were composed of Hellenistic Jews and Pagans? But as unity of conception was impossible among men of different sentiments and nationalities, how were fusions of thought effected between distant churches? Or if the creative spirit was confined to one community, how did it find acceptance in other churches, whose moral environment differed largely? If, on the contrary, Pagan converts set themselves to the creation of myths involving the moral aspects of the Messiah's character, how widely must they have differed from those of the original adherents of Jesus. But if our opponents, to escape these difficulties, assume that the moral aspects of the character of the Jesus of the Evangelists were developed before the spread of Christianity, they cut the ground from under their own feet. In that case it must have been accomplished within a few years of the crucifixion. What is this but to admit the possibility of a moral miracle, and to concede that the historical Jesus was not merely human but a divine man?

We have already pointed out the difficulties involved in the conception of the union of perfect benevolence and holiness in the same character, and the perfection with which this has been delineated in the Gospels. Every conceivable moral problem lies between the commencement of such an attempt and its successful elaboration. The Jesus of the Gospels is a glorious delineation of unselfish benevolence. No less worthy of adoration is the diversified aspect of his holiness. We ask whether there was any thing in Phariseeism, Sadduceeism, Esseneism, or any form of Judaism out of which the conception of such a character could have grown. If there was, let its nature be clearly and distinctly stated. If any element of Gentile thought was tending thitherward, let it be pointed out, and shown that it could have influenced the mind of the Galilean Jew. But instead of the definite stages of the growth of such a character being set before us, and their possibility shown, we are asked to be content with a number of barren generalities. The early Christians, we are told, were idealists; they embodied their ideas in the form of a mythology, and thereout sprang a Christ.

How did the atheist of old create the Universe? Infinite bodies of atoms, in the course of infinite time, rolled in obedience to some eternal laws through infinite space. These laws, however, allowed the atoms to effect an infinite number of fusions. At last they rushed together, and thereout emerged the world. The atheist, out of a congeries of atoms, creates the harmonies of nature. The mythologists, from a congeries of myths, create a glorious Christ. But the one has at his command eternity, the other not above seventy years.

But we must insist on grappling with details. How did the mythologist arrive at the conception? Will it be pretended that any such character, whether real or legendary, or even any approximation to it, can be found in the whole mass of ancient literature? If the whole of existing mythology, poetry, or philosophy shows no tendency towards the development of such a character, what was the particular influence which acted on the credulous followers of Jesus?

We are told that spontaneous impulse urged on the mythologists, and always directed them rightly. We are dealing with men who profess to give us a philosophical account of the origin of the Gospels. Let them tell us the nature of this impulse, within what limits it works, and what are the definite laws which determine its operations. Those who assert that Christianity is a human growth admit that it must have been subject in its evolution to the conditions of mental and moral law. Let them show that it is so. A revelation from heaven is a possible solution of the existence of the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists: an unknown power in human nature, which acted thus once only, and never before or since, is not.

Certain conditions must be postulated to impart to the theory even the appearance of plausibility. As we have shown, endless diversities in the mythical creations were inevitable. Moral progress is slow. Party spirit will be violent. Fusions will require long intervals of time to effect them. But all these things must be postulated; and their consequences overcome; yet the whole must be effected within a period, which a man who was a youth at the time of the crucifixion, might easily have witnessed before he sunk into his grave. Developments which are as

nothing compared with this have required centuries for their growth. But the truth of these can bear the test of the facts of history; the others exist only in the imagination.

The character of Jesus is one of the most unselfish benevolence. A spot of selfishness is nowhere to be found in it. It rises to the most absolute height of self-sacrifice. The delicacy with which it is depicted in every action of our Lord's life is complete. It does not consist of a number of outlines placed in bold relief, but in multitudes of the minutest shades. Yet it is interwoven into a character of absolute holiness. A whole galaxy of virtues are combined in the same glorious character. It does not contain one single trait of weakness. Greatness unites in it with humility. Mildness is combined with a zeal which devoured it like a flame of fire. While it presents us with an exhibition of a most untiring patience, Jesus is depicted as capable of anger. The form and outward environment of a servant is combined with the dignity of a King. A divine consciousness unites with the exhibition of every human feeling in active play. There is no divine or human virtue absent from the character, and each occupies its proper place in subordination to the whole. Such is its complication. Can it be pretended that the conception and correct dramatisation of such a character does not involve the solution of the most varied problems?

But if the mythic theory be correct, how must the mythologists have effected it? They set to work without a model to direct them, not knowing whither they were tending. They produced a number of mythical creations in which each embodied his own idealization. Each of these fictions portrayed only portions of the character, and out of them ultimately sprang the complicated whole, but we are not told how. Let it be observed that the moral conceptions with which the mythologists started were such, that their first creations must have portrayed a Messiah of an entirely different moral aspect from that of the Jesus of the Evangelists.

Every one of the virtues of our Lord's character are mutually adjusted to the whole and to each other. Its creation involves the balancing of the nicest proportions. If we alter the proportions of the different virtues which compose it, the character is no longer the same. But there



is not a single mythic story or historical event in the Gospels in which it is exhibited as a whole. The whole is made up of the several mythic stories of which the Gospels are said to consist. It follows, therefore, that the authors of the myths must have produced it in portions. These, though the work of many minds, are exactly fitted into the whole and one another, and together they make up a glorious unity.

This portion of our argument is so important as to render a few illustrations necessary. As we have said, the Gospels consist of a number of mythic stories on which are deeply impressed certain attributes of our Lord's character. These stories must have been composed by different mythologists, before the whole existed to guide them. Most of them present us with several attributes of his character, a few with single ones, none with all. How was this capable of accomplishment? It is certain that before the myths could have been set forth in their present form, the different mythologists must have succeeded in realizing all the component parts of the great outline. In one word, unless a full conception of the portraiture was present to their minds, the myths could not have been produced. Yet, according to the mythic theory, the conception of the whole was evolved out of that of the parts, and had no existence in its present form, until it arose out of a fusion of the labours of the mythologists.

It was impossible that the author of the myth of the Resurrection of Lazarus could have created it unless he had the leading features of the portraiture of Jesus present to his mind. The author has clearly incorporated into the myth both the divine and human aspects of our Lord's person. He must, therefore, have had in his mind a clear conception of them both before he could accomplish his work. Now how does the case stand? The divine aspects of the character are set forth in the clearest outline. Jesus is made to stand forth before us in all his self-conscious greatness. In the midst of the scene of death he is portrayed as feeling within him the conscious power of the resurrection. He declares himself to be the life. His union with his Father is exhibited as perfect. He feels safe under the protection of His providence. The dead man issues from the tomb in obedience to his word. But

this divine aspect of his character the author has enshrined in a temple of human sympathies. He is described as feeling for this family not merely the sentiment of general benevolence, but an actual human friendship. Notwithstanding the divine calmness of his inner will, he is depicted as capable of feeling a profound sympathy for sorrow. He is obliged even to impose on himself the exercise of self-restraint. The sorrow becomes contagious, and He who is the Resurrection and the Life at last bursts into tears. In the act of performing the miracle, mildness, condescension, and unobtrusiveness are united with the dignity of the Son of God.

But perhaps it will be said that this miracle is not a mythic story properly so called, but the invention of a self-conscious impostor, and that it was elaborated at a late date. The Synoptics are equally available for our purpose.

Few of the supporters of the theory will entertain a doubt that a great scene in St. Matthew's Gospel which describes the Son of Man as seated on the throne of his glory is a mythical creation, and that it was never uttered by the historic Jesus. But the author has embodied in his description all the great aspects of the divine and human character of the Messiah in the fulness of their moral grandeur. The human Son of Man is depicted as seated on the throne of the divine glory. He is surrounded by his angels and is sitting in judgment on the Gentile world. The divine within him shines forth in his every act, but it is enshrined in a temple of the purest humanity. The aspect of the humble Son of Man is clearly manifested amidst the brightness of the Son of God. He is still intensely conscious of his humiliation. In the midst of his superhuman greatness he is exhibited as the picture of condescension. He addresses the saints as his brethren, and declares that their sufferings have filled him with the profoundest sympathy. Throughout the entire scene the divine shines forth in the human, and the human in the divine.

But if we take almost any of the myths in the Synoptics, we shall find that they have delineated not single but complicated moral aspects of the Messianic character, and that the identity of feature has been preserved in the midst of the complication. The different portions of the

character which they exemplify bear most unquestionable indications of having been framed in reference to each other and to the whole. The entire aspect of the Gospels renders the assumption inevitable that the myths cannot have created the portraiture, but the portraiture the myths.

The believers in the unhistorical character of the Gospels are therefore bound to inform us how it is possible for mythologists to create detached portions of the moral aspect of a character before the conception of the whole was elaborated, without any model to direct them but their own idealizations, and ultimately to evolve the Jesus of the Gospels.

The bare statement of the case is its refutation. It is impossible that the moral portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists can be accounted for on the supposition of its mythical origin. The actual facts presented by the Gospels render the alternative, that it is a wilful forgery, impossible. If, to escape from the difficulties of the case, it be assumed that it is the character of a human but historic Jesus, we reply, that this contradicts alike the truth of philosophy and of history. Least of all, is it the conceivable character of a Jew at the period of the Advent. If it be a real and not an ideal character one assumption and one only will account for its existence, viz., that the Jesus of history was exactly what the Gospel portraiture represents him to have been, the Son of God and the Son of Man.

The supporters of the mythic theory postulate a number of impossible conditions. They require that moral progress should be rapid. It is always slow. They require that developments should always tend toward progress. They are often retrograde ones. They require changes in the sentiments of society. They produce diversities in spiritual and moral conception. They require long intervals of time. History will only concede a short one. They require elevated moral sentiment, but supply no means of creating the elevation. They require party spirit; but this produces confusion. They require unity of result, but are compelled to postulate a multitude of agents. They require fusions; but fusions demand long intervals of time which they have not to give. They require the solution of the most difficult problems in morality, and commit the task to a multitude of credulous mythologists. In short, they

deny the possibility of physical miracles, but assert that of moral ones.

Equally unable is the mythic theory to give us any account of the origin of the miraculous portions of the Gospels. It, without hesitation, pronounces every miracle a fable, but the phenomena which the miraculous narratives present it is utterly unable to solve.

We have already pointed out the peculiar character of these miracles.

First. They are all sober miracles.

Secondly. They differ from all other miraculous stories by having the impress of our Lord's moral character indelibly stamped on them.

Thirdly. They bear one trait of a most peculiar character, that of never invading the regions of the spiritual and moral worlds.

The supporters of the mythic theory are not agreed as to whether the historical Jesus ever attempted to perform a miracle. The majority of them think that he did not, and therefore believe that the miracles of the Gospels are due to nothing but the inventive powers of his followers. Some, however, are of opinion that he may have made attempts to cure those species of diseases over which the mind exerts a powerful influence. He may have been deceived himself, and thought that these were miracles. At any rate they were the foundations on which the fictions of his wonder-working power were erected. Renan's criticism on the origin of the myth of the resurrection of Lazarus we hardly know how to characterize. He represents Jesus as the greatest and the best of men, whose peer nature has not yet produced, and doubts whether she will ever produce a greater. To speak plainly, however, he represents this miracle as concocted between Jesus and Martha, and positively describes the great man of his highest admiration as lending his aid to a sorry imposition. Where has he learned his morality?

But although Jesus can always be made to have been a very great man whenever it is convenient to do so, there are times when it is necessary for him to be represented as a very little one. They consider, therefore, that neither he nor his followers had the smallest idea that nature was governed by law. They knew nothing of its order. Every thing

around them was the result of a special intervention of the Deity. With them there was no such idea as that of a miracle in any proper meaning of the word, because they had no conception of that law of which it is the exception.

A state of mind somewhat approaching to this must exist in all ages which are really mythical.

But what is the invariable characteristic of the miraculous stories which are invented in mythical ages? The grotesque, the monstrous, or the ridiculous.

But there is not a single grotesque, monstrous, or ridiculous miracle to be found in the pages of the New Testament. We may safely invite a comparison between the miracles recorded in the Gospels, and those to be found in any other narrative in existence, and trust the verdict in the hands of our opponents.

How then have the Gospel miracles acquired such a character? If they are mythical creations, what makes them differ from every other fictitious story which exists?

Our opponents have no answer to give. Their theory obliges them to assert that all the miraculous stories are fictions. To get these myths invented they are obliged to assume that both Jesus and his followers were intensely credulous. But such characters, whenever they have invented miracles, have always produced the grotesque, the monstrous, or the ridiculous. The first step, therefore, which the supporters of the mythic theory are compelled to take, is to demand a concession which destroys their own cause.

But their moral aspect presents another great peculiarity in the miracles of the Gospels by which they are distinguished from all mythic miracles. Nine-tenths of these latter are reports of physical wonders entirely devoid of a moral character; while every miracle in the Gospels is invested with a moral aspect; and all, with very few exceptions, are directed to the removal of physical suffering. Our Lord invariably imparts to the miracle the impress of his own moral character. Scarcely any of them are wrought in the regions of the purely physical world.

It is incumbent on the supporters of the mythic theory to point out the causes of the difference between these phenomena of the Christian miracles and the miracles of mythology. It is not the mere presence of Christianity



which can be assigned as the reason for this difference. The fourth and subsequent centuries teem with accounts of the miraculous. The spurious Gospels are full of them. But they are exactly of that character of which those in the Gospels are not. We ask, therefore, why is every one of the miracles of the Gospels invested with a moral element? Why are they all, with scarcely an exception, miracles of mercy? Why are none of them wrought in support of superstitious practices? Why do none of them describe combats with the devil? Why is there not one invested with the aspect of the monkish miracles? Why do none of them resemble the stories of the Arabian nights? Why is every one of them worthy of the great teacher come from God?

If we take the whole class of fictitious miracles, the moral aspect which they exhibit is contemptible. A man who invents a miracle is low in the moral scale, and his miracle bears the impress of the mint in which it was coined. But the Gospel miracles not only have an elevated tendency and aim, but bear the impress of the elevated morality of our Lord's character.

Yet if the views of our opponents are correct every one of them is a fiction. If each miracle is mythic, the whole context in which it stands must be of a similar character. But our opponents are ready to draw a distinction between the moral and the miraculous portions of the Gospels. Such a distinction might be of some importance if the whole of the miraculous narrative was not thoroughly baptized with the moral aspects of our Lord's person. But our Lord is the prominent feature in the miraculous narrations, and he appears in exactly the same moral environment as he does in those portions which are not miraculous. The credulous mythologists therefore who invented the miracles had at the same time before their mental eye a clear conception of his moral portraiture, and have succeeded in impressing it on their miraculous inventions. Where, in the whole course of human history, can it be shown that such a spirit ever animated a body of mythologists?

But another character of the miracles which have been attributed to Jesus is utterly inconsistent with their having originated in mythical creations, the fact that our Lord is

never once delineated as having attempted to work a miracle in the spiritual world.

To this remarkable feature of the Gospels we have already drawn attention. It is impossible that the student of them can have any doubt of the truth of the following statement: that whereas our Lord is uniformly delineated as attempting to act on men's bodies by miraculous influences, he is never once described as so acting on men's souls.

How is this to be accounted for if the Gospels are merely ideal creations? The mythologists were evidently deeply impressed with the truth that Jesus was pre-eminently the physician of the soul. They have dramatised him as representing his work of the cure of the soul as a far greater one than that of a healer of the body. In the same story they have described him as operating in both capacities. But these representations are uniform and consistent. He is always dramatised as employing spiritual means only in attempting to work spiritual cures, and never once as appealing to his supernatural power.

We ask the believers in the mythic theory to account for this consistently with their assumptions. There is a philosophical propriety in the representation. How were the mythologists to get acquainted with it? Is it believable that the children of a credulous age should have conceived of the phenomena of the visible universe as lying beyond the regions of fixed law, and those of the spiritual world as invariably subject to it? Even now the truth that man's moral and spiritual nature is the subject of law is but imperfectly recognized.

There is not a single narrative in the Gospels of which it is not easier to conceive the possibility than that a number of credulous people in a credulous age should have spontaneously invented a number of mythic tales which have the characteristics which these miraculous stories present. Such people could have only reproduced the image of their own credulity. Whence have these miracles got their sobriety, whence their high moral character, whence that propriety of conception which has harmoniously fitted them to the character of the greatest and most merciful of men, whence their conformity to

philosophic truth, notwithstanding every temptation to impart to them the opposite character? The mythic theory may full well invoke the aid of a long interval of time, during which the grotesque productions of a fabulous age could have gradually assumed their present colouring.

But the theory makes ever increasing demands on our credulity. The Gospels have not only portrayed our Lord as the ideal of moral perfection in his own character, but they have attributed to him a system of moral and religious teaching. If the Gospels are unhistorical, that teaching must have been the creation of the mythologists. We have already seen that it cannot have been the teaching of a human Jesus. It constitutes a great whole. It is founded on the assumption of our Lord's supernatural character. All its various points are interwoven together by the great motives by which it is enforced; and those motives are to be found nowhere else. Even if detached precepts of our Lord are to be found elsewhere, his spirit has appropriated them to himself, and destroyed their individual character. The whole bears impressed on it the stamp of Christ, and is directly related to the peculiar portraiture in which he is exhibited by the Evangelists.

Even if every precept of Christian morality could be gleaned up, by ransacking different ancient authors, it would be no answer to the argument. They would stand in a wholly different relation to that which they occupy in the morality of Christ. The question at issue is not the mere existence of a moral precept, but the relation in which different moral precepts stand to each other and to the entire morality, and to the motives by which they are enforced.

The morality of the Gospels bears on it the stamp of a single mind. It has not the smallest appearance of being an eclectic system. Most of the moral principles discussed in the *Ethics* of Aristotle had been discovered long before the composition of that work; but the system of that philosopher has not the smallest appearance of being a selection from the labours of others. Its originality consists in their combination, and in the motivity by which they are enforced. It assumed a unity in the mind of the philosopher before its detached portions could have

been elaborated. It would be a strange argument to adduce, that because different moral precepts in it had been thought of before, that great work could have assumed its present form through the labours of a body of mythologists impelled by the mere power of spontaneous impulse.

In the same manner with respect to the morality of the Gospels. It bears indubitable evidence that the whole previously existed in the mind of its originator, before the detached portions of it could have been elaborated. But according to the mythic theory, the contrary must have been the case. The whole must have grown up spontaneously out of the parts, and could have had no real existence until every one of them had been created. But nothing is more evident than that each portion of our Lord's teaching is directly fitted to every other portion of it. This is what those who pronounce the Gospels a congeries of fables have to account for. It need not be said that it is wholly inconsistent with their mythic origin.

But if an attempt is made to evade this difficulty, by asserting that the morality is that of an historical but purely human Jesus, we reply that, taking the system as a whole, it cannot possibly have been the creation of any Jew who existed at the time of the Advent; that it is exhibited in those portions of the Gospels which our opponents pronounce essentially mythical; and above all, that it bears a direct relation to the Messianic conceptions of our Lord's character, as it is exhibited in the portraiture of the Evangelists.

We shall make ourselves plainer by adducing an example. We will take a very simple one, and shall only observe that such examples are very numerous in the Gospels. That the gift of a cup of cold water should not lose its reward, may, for ought we know, be an ordinary truth of morality and religion. It may possibly have been known long before the time of our Lord. But whether this be so or not, the form in which this precept is given in the Gospels, has stamped the duty with the impress of Christ's Messianic character. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose

his reward." This precept and promise issue from the Lord of the Church, and pre-suppose his recognition in that character. But this belongs to the supernatural element of the Gospels, and pre-supposes its existence.

We will select one still more striking. It may be an ordinary duty of morality to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to entertain the stranger, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, and to relieve the miseries of the prisoner. It is quite immaterial to our argument, whether these duties were or were not recognized before they were incorporated into our Gospels. But the duty is placed on a wholly different basis when it is put into the mouth of Jesus. "I was an hungred, and ye gave *me* meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave *me* drink; I was a stranger, and ye took *me* in. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these *my brethren, ye did it unto me.*" Our Lord here not only teaches these duties, but makes himself the central figure in the morality which they involve.

It is obvious, therefore, that such is not the teaching of any mere historic Jew who could have existed at the period of the Advent. It is not a bare precept of morality, but one erected on the foundation of his Messianic portraiture. The Gospels are full of these, and in fact they inform us that the multitude took particular notice of this peculiar aspect of our Lord's morality, and the distinction which existed between him and an ordinary teacher. They observed, "He taught as one who had authority, and not as the scribes."

It is impossible, therefore, to divorce the moral teaching of our Lord from the superhuman aspect of his person as it is portrayed in the Gospels. If the one be mythical, so must also be the other.

Our opponents will assert that the passage to which we have referred in Matthew is unquestionably mythical. But what benefit will they derive from it? It will prove that the moral teaching contained in it must have been invented by mythologists. Let them adduce another instance in which mythology has produced similar teaching. When have such persons evolved an elevated morality, and based its foundation on their own fictions? The Gospels contain numbers of precepts of a similar character, which, if



any can be attributed to an historic Jesus, must certainly be his.

If we view the morality of Christ as a whole, and not as so many detached precepts, it is the opposite of every system which has ever existed. It bases its duties on unselfishness, while, in man's imperfect state, it tolerates the existence of reasonable self-love. It reverses the order of the importance which all previous systems have attached to the different virtues, by elevating the humbler at the expense of the more imposing ones. It is impossible to read any previously existing system of morality without perceiving that this is the fact.

It follows, therefore, that those who deny the historical character of the Gospels, ask us to believe what is utterly incredible. A Jew, brought up under the sectarian influences of Judaism, who had been taught to contemplate with admiration the great heroes of his race, must have passed at a bound, from the morality in the atmosphere of which he was born, to the morality of Christ. His life, as we have seen, was a short one. How rapid must have been its revolutions. The morality of his childhood and of his youth must have been separated by a profound gulph from that of his manhood. How was the interval bridged over? He must have withdrawn himself from all the influences by which he was surrounded, discerned at an instinctive glance the entire futility of those under which he had previously existed, and by a single effort have become the Creator of the New. Can such things be believed in as possible, contrary to the laws of mind and the testimony of history? Will our opponents try to shelter themselves from the difficulty by assuming that the historic Jesus lived to the utmost limits of human life? No one man by the powers of unassisted thought has ever created such a moral revolution. But according to the theory of our opponents it is impossible to attribute the morality of the Gospels to the historic Jesus, for it is equally found in those parts of them which they unhesitatingly pronounce mythic.

The changes which the morality of the Gospels exhibits when compared with all previous systems could only have been brought about through a succession of stages of growth. Where can our opponents find time to effect them? If generated under the influence of natural laws,

they could only have been brought about by the effects of an altered civilization reacting on the conditions of thought.

But our opponents are confronted by another difficulty, even if they could vanquish the previous one. The historical Jesus must not only have succeeded in creating the morality of the Gospels out of his own mind (for to believe that it is a mythical creation is absurd), but he must have convinced a large number of his contemporaries of the truth of the new system which he erected on his own person, in opposition to all the prejudices in which they had been brought up. If he had not succeeded in founding a Church which acknowledged his teaching as its moral code, as he wrote nothing, his morality must have perished with him.

But Jesus must not only have forsaken all the ideas in which he had been brought up, and elaborated what we may almost call his own revelation, during his short life; he must also have induced his followers to do the same. That he did so is certain, and created a Church which has transmitted his teaching to posterity. But this was beyond the powers of a man who never attained the age of forty.

The distance which separated Socrates from the moral atmosphere of his countrymen was small. The same is true of every teacher of mankind whose existence history condescends to recognize. But what would have become of Socrates and his philosophy if he had perished at Potidæa?

Driven from one position, those who are determined to maintain that the Gospels are unhistorical must take refuge in another. Let us suppose that the morality of the Gospels was gradually evolved in the minds of the followers of Jesus through a succession of developments. In estimating its possibility, we must observe that the same moral aspect pervades all and every portion of them, his miracles, his parables, his discourses and his actions. If this is the case, we must invoke the aid of mythologists for its creation. They must, therefore, have evolved it in detached portions before they could have conceived of it as a whole. They must have succeeded in clothing every portion of it in the same moral dress, and in stamping on it an essential unity of conception.

But to name such a supposition is to refute it. It is involved in even greater absurdities than many of the suppositions which we have already exposed. Besides, who ever heard of an elevated system of morality, produced in a mythic age by credulous men, and yet possessing a world-wide catholicity of spirit, and based on the foundation of love?

The further the supporters of the mythic theory advance, the greater are the difficulties which they have to encounter. Their morality is not the most important feature of the Gospels, but the motivity on which it is based. This is a pure creation of Christ, and admits only of having been erected on his Messianic portraiture. The motives which the Gospels bring to bear on man's moral nature are in his mouth a power; in that of any other man who ever existed they would have been a nullity.

Our Lord constitutes the centre of the morality of the Gospel. He has brought to bear on man every motive the existence of which previous thinkers knew. He has imparted to them the entire power which religion can be made to exert on the human heart, and he has crowned the edifice by the revelation of himself, as the supreme motive to act on man's moral and spiritual being.

Our Lord has accomplished what all previous thinkers had failed to effect, the creation of a motive powerful to stir the profoundest depths of human nature.

The supporters of the mythic theory cannot deny that the Jesus of the Gospels has acted with a power in the moral and spiritual worlds compared with which everything else which has been brought to bear on them has been comparatively weak. He has done more to elevate man than any other. Even where he has not elevated him, he has acted on him with prodigious might. He has been the foundation stone of many of the greatest events in modern history. They will also not deny that he has reigned with the supremest power in the minds of the holiest and the best, who have accorded to him the highest throne in their spiritual temple. All the benevolent institutions of modern society are his creation. The reality of the power which has been infused by him during a period of eighteen centuries into human nature it is impossible to deny. Multitudes of men have consecrated their lives to

him in consequence of the attractive power which he has exerted over them. To this hour the holiest of men bow in adoration before his character.

What has created the essential difference between ancient and modern feeling? Who has given a divine aspect to the humbler virtues? What first softened the stern rigour of ancient holiness? Out of what has the conception grown that the humblest labours in the work of doing good are divine? What has impelled multitudes of men and women to encounter masses of wretchedness and sin for the purpose of rescuing them from their degradation? Where has the exhausted struggler with his own corruption looked for strength to renew the contest? On whose altar has been poured out the self-sacrifice of centuries? There is only one answer which can be returned. Men have found the highest spiritual and moral power to reside in that portraiture of Jesus which we see depicted in the Gospels.

The person of our Lord has proved eminently attractive. It has imparted a strength to the moral law compared with which every other motive has been powerless. In what portion of our Gospels does this mighty power reside? Is it in their morality? Our opponents tell us that that was known long before. Is it in its doctrine of the unity of God? Is it in the thought of God's fatherhood to mankind? Is it in the discovery of the truth of the immortality of the soul? Is it in its exhibition of the excellence of virtue? Philosophers had before declared her supremely beautiful. Is it in exciting a spirit of self-devoted heroism? No: the power exists in the entire aspect of the person of Jesus; especially in those portions of it which impel men, whether they live, to live to Him, and whether they die, to die to Him.

This spiritual power resides in the Evangelical portraiture of Christ, and cannot be separated from it. A mutual relation exists between it and the morality of the Gospel. The new commandment is meaningless and the old one powerless unless we pre-suppose the existence of the superhuman Christ. What? are we really asked to believe that this great power of the spiritual world, which all men admire, and holy men adore, has originated in the wild mythological creations of deluded men, who have

fabricated a congeries of fictions, which, when placed together, have created a Christ?

But these mythologists must have succeeded in solving another great problem, which had hitherto evaded the efforts of all previous thinkers. The most important of all moral questions is, what is the most powerful influence for good by which the mind of man is capable of being acted on? What is the best means of impelling the good to the practice of holiness, or of raising the degraded from their degradation? All previous great thinkers had answered the former question unanimously, that the only principle powerful to act on human nature is that of habituation. The second question they answered with a faltering voice. If habituation was not that power, which was very doubtful, they knew of no certain remedy. Now, according to the views which the believers of the mythic theory labour to inculcate respecting the origin of our Gospels, the same questions must also have presented themselves to the mythologists, and they have given us their solution of them. They unanimously returned an answer the opposite to that which has been returned by the thinkers, viz., that faith was that power. They dramatised that idea in every portion of their creations, fearlessly and without a doubt. Experience has proved that the credulous mythologists were right and the thinkers wrong.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the principle of faith in our Lord's system of morality. It is the power which breathes life into it. It is the means on which he relied to strengthen the holy, to confirm the weak, and to elevate the degraded. Throughout the Gospels it occupies the central place in the teaching of Jesus. Whenever it is not expressly stated, it is involved in that most prominent feature of the Gospels, our Lord's intense self-assertion. His action on others may be described as a constant effort to create it.

Such an idea had occurred to no previous thinker. A few glimpses of it may perhaps be found in Plato's speculations, when he recommends to his disciples the contemplation of abstract ideas. But his views on this point are little more than a shadow. With Christ faith is no abstract idea, but a cordial acquiescence in the divine character and his own. With Plato this contemplation



formed the luxury of a few elevated minds. With Christ it is the living centre of all human morality.

Our opponents will not deny the reality of the power which this great principle has exerted. It is written on the pages of history. Since our Lord preached its efficacy it has been the great moving principle in the moral and spiritual world. Its character as exhibited in the Gospels is thoroughly set before us in our Lord's words: "Believe in God, Believe also in me." Whatever ameliorations have taken place in human nature, have been effected under its influence. Christianity has recovered ten thousand degraded men from their degradation, where all the efforts of moralists and philosophers have succeeded in recovering one. The power of faith has created a fulcrum to act on human nature, which previously had no existence. Even politicians have been compelled to make its power a subject of their calculations.

We think it superfluous to refer to the Gospels for the purpose of adducing direct proof of the importance which is attached in them to the principle of faith. The most cursory reader cannot fail to have observed this feature in them. It is spread over their entire surface, and not confined to any one portion.

Both the portraiture of our Lord, his religious teaching, and his morality, have all been framed so as to bear a direct relation to that faith which the Gospels set forth as their central religious and moral principle. Nothing can be a more convincing, that the conception of the whole is the work of one mind.

But the supporters of the mythic theory ask us to believe that the discovery of such a power, the moral and religious systems to which it is related, and the portraiture of the Christ which imparts to it its vitality, have been effected by the unconscious creations of mythologists, who were unable to distinguish between the dreams of their own imaginations and the realities of fact. We ask emphatically, is not this as great a violation of the order of the moral and spiritual world as a miracle is of the material? If so, why may we not as well at once believe that the Gospel is a revelation from above?

We have now established the general fact that it is impossible that the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evan-

gelists can have been created by the means which those who assert its unhistorical character are compelled to postulate for its production. We shall now leave the general argument, and show that the real historical conditions of the case are utterly inconsistent with the mythic theory, or with any modification of it.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

THE LIMITS OF THE PERIOD WHICH AUTHENTIC HISTORY ASSIGNS AS THAT DURING WHICH THE CONCEPTION OF A MYTHICAL CHRIST MUST HAVE BEEN CREATED AND DEVELOPED IN ITS FULNESS.

THE authors of the mythic theory were not insensible of the difficulties which beset their path. They were aware that such a creation as that of the Christ of the Gospels could have been no sudden birth out of the elements from which it must have originated. If it be an ideal creation it must have been a growth.

To have supposed the contrary, would have been to have set at nought the whole range of human experience. This teaches us with no doubtful voice, that all great changes in thought or feeling, whether they be moral, spiritual, or intellectual, never emerge at their full dimensions out of one wholly different. They have been growths of a more or less gradual character, developed in conformity with the laws of the human mind.

No truth respecting man's moral or spiritual being, we might almost add, no truth of physics, is more firmly established than this. It is consequently of the highest importance to be able to determine what interval of time is necessary for the development of a fundamental change in our moral or spiritual idealization, and for leavening considerable numbers of men with the principles of that change.

The authors of the mythic theory have wisely demanded a considerable interval, during which the full conception of the Christ of the Gospels was developed from its original elements. But history assigns certain definite limits to the

problem, and these have prevented them from asking an indefinite period, such as physical science frequently and not unreasonably postulates. The necessity of this arises from the fact that Christianity was born in an historic period, by which it was also preceded and followed. Had it been possible to have run up the origin of Christianity into the unhistorical ages, it would have been easier to have made its creation by means of the successive generation of myths to wear a greater appearance of probability. Even then the close inquirer would have discovered the difficulties involved in it. But where there is an absence of rigid investigation, it is wonderful what may be represented as possible by the aid of a few thousand years in the unhistorical past. By such assistance a cloudy haze may be easily thrown over the whole question. It is astonishing what man can be conceived of as effecting in the course of a few thousand years, when we have no means of bringing theory to the test of historic evidence.

But the maintainers of the mythic theory are fully aware that authentic history allows but a moderate interval of time during which, if our Gospels be mythic, their central portraiture of the Christ must have been developed. They have however determined to demand the utmost limits, and even more than the limits which the truth of history will allow them. Considering the difficulties in which they are involved, the addition of fifty, thirty, or even twenty years is of the utmost importance, and even that of ten must be received with thankfulness. There is nothing of which the mythic theory stands in greater want, to give it even an air of probability, than a considerable interval of time during which it might have carried on its operations.

The exigencies of their position therefore have compelled them to exhaust the utmost resources of criticism, to prove that the Gospels were published in their existing form at a later period than that which has been generally assigned to them. The utmost limit which they have ventured to ask is, for the Synoptics some time during the first ten years of the second century, and for St. John's Gospel, before the termination of the first seventy years of the second century. They have made this demand, not because they do not want a longer interval to give their views even a semblance

of plausibility, but because history in her clearest voice would have protested against any additional demand. The interval which they require is that of centuries; but when that cannot be had, a few years must be accepted.

It follows, therefore, that according to their theory the Synoptic portraiture of the Christ must have been completed somewhere between fifty-five and seventy-five years after the crucifixion, and the Johannean portrait in about 130 years after the same event.

The maintainers of the mythic theory are unanimous in attempting to show that the fourth Gospel was not composed until a very considerable number of years after the Synoptics, fifty at the least. The greatest labour has been expended on this attempt. But our previous observations prove that the gain is hardly commensurate with it. If the question at issue simply respected the development of a dogmatic creed, the gain of fifty years and a publication of this Gospel in the second century would be a considerable advantage. But the formation of such a creed is not the question at issue.

We have already pointed out that the distinction between St. John and the Synoptics is one of formal statement, rather than of substance. The formal evolution of the doctrine of the Logos, as we read it in this Gospel, is unknown to the Synoptics. Its discourses also present us with an element of which the latter contain only slight traces, but such traces are not absolutely wanting. But while this is the case the portraitures of the Jesus of the Synoptics and of the Jesus of St. John differ in no one essential point. Some of the supporters of the mythic theory have asserted that it is impossible that the discourses of the Synoptics and those of St. John could have been uttered by the same man. This is far from being a self-evident truth. But we have shown that the dramatised conception of the Jesus of the Synoptics and that of the fourth Gospel are based on exactly the same principles. They are not two portraits of two different Christs, but of the same in all their great features.

If the mythic faculty has not succeeded in dramatising a Jesus more varied in character and conception than that which is presented to us in St. John's Gospel, its progress during the interval of fifty years must have been slow.

While the miracles recorded by St. John are nearly all different from those recorded by the Synoptics, no new attribute of holiness, majesty, or mercy, no new trait of divine or human character shines forth in them. In the report of the miracle common to both, the Synoptics are fully on a par with St. John. It has been said that the story of the healing of the nobleman's son is an altered version of the cure of the centurion's servant. If so, it has certainly been altered for the worse. If such alterations were made designedly, it was certainly not worth while to have omitted the matchless myth of the agony in the Garden, and to have substituted for it the account of the mental perturbation which took place during the interview with the Hellenists.

The only gain which has accrued to the authors of the mythic theory from their labours to prove the late date of the publication of this Gospel is a sufficient time for the evolution of the Logos doctrine, and the peculiarities of the discourses which may be viewed as its complement.

It is impossible to say if each of the Synoptics had been asked to propound a theory as to the dogmatic aspect of the person of the Christ whom he has depicted, in what precise form it would have presented itself to his mind. He might not have elaborated dogmatic statements in the exact form in which we meet with them in the fourth Gospel, but we may be quite sure that he would have affirmed that the Son of Man whom he had been delineating was also the Son of God, in a sense in which no other man could be. We are ready to concede that a period of more than fifty years is quite long enough for the evolution of the conception of the Jesus of St. John from the Jesus of the Synoptics, as far as there is any real difference between them. We have between St. John and the Synoptics a tangible difference, and our opponents have assigned the period which they think necessary for its evolution. This is very important in reference to our argument, for it gives us a definite measure by which we can estimate the rate of mythic growth.

If the author of the fourth Gospel designed to portray a higher and grander aspect of the conception of the Christ than that which was already current in Christian society, the mythologists who conceived it ought to have



dramatised their Jesus in a succession of mythic actions in which this grander conception of him would have been embodied. We have a right to expect this more elevated portraiture of him in conformity with all previous analogy of the mode of the working of the mythic spirit. But when we examine the myths of which this Gospel is said to be composed, we find them, with perhaps the exception of the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, to be but little improvements on the older ones.

This Gospel contains seven miraculous stories, while it refers to the performance of several others. Only one of these is common to it and the Synoptics. The six are essentially of the same type as these latter, with the one exception we have noticed, and do not present us with higher dramatic portraitures of the Godhead which dwelt in the person of Jesus, nor of the moral perfections of his character. At the very same time, while he has not hesitated to ascribe a wonder-working power to Jesus, the author represents the divine perfections of his character as higher evidence of his mission than even the miracles which he describes him as performing. The author of this Gospel, who has so successfully imitated the character of an eye-witness, must have been a man of genius; and if legends of a more exalted character than those of the Synoptics were not to be found, he might easily have invented them. But all that he has accomplished, even according to the views of our opponents, is the forgery of a certain number of dogmatical discourses.

The maintainers of the mythic theory postulate fifty years as the interval during which this Gospel was developed from the Jesus of the Synoptics. This is a most important concession. It proves that the rate of the development of spiritual and moral ideas by the generation of myths and legends is slow, and that they require a considerable interval of time for their successful elaboration. It makes it also evident that if a period of fifty years was necessary to elaborate the Jesus of St. John from that of the Synoptics, a period of seventy years is far too short to elaborate the Jesus of the Synoptics from any form of Jewish thought or feeling which could have existed at the time of the crucifixion, or from any life of a human Jesus

which could have been historical, if he were a mere man like ourselves. The distance of time which separates St. John's Gospel from the Synoptics forms a definite measure by which we may estimate the possibility of religious and moral developments, and the time which is necessary to accomplish them.

We have shown that all great changes in our mental conceptions are growths, which slowly pass from one stage to another. When the interval between them is wide, the period necessary to effect them must be proportionately great. No savage race has suddenly created an elevated type of religion or morality. Its religious and moral creations are in conformity with its own ideal, and slowly rise above it. No civilized man has passed suddenly from one type of thought into one fundamentally different. Whatever elevation has taken place has been effected through a succession of stages. The attainment of a certain height requires to be converted into a platform from which the attainment of a higher is rendered a possibility. If then developments, such as are requisite to convert the original Jewish conception of the Messiah into that of the Synoptics, have been effected through a succession of mythical creations, it is necessary that they should pass through successive stages of improvement.

Let us suppose such changes to have been accomplished, and that a somewhat more lofty ideal of thought and feeling had been introduced. Before a further advance in the direction of the Jesus of the Gospels could have taken place it is necessary that this ideal should have become firmly fixed in the mind, and afterwards that a more advanced conception of moral and religious thought should have been formed, which would go on embodying itself in fresh mythic creations until by slow and painful stages it at last attained to the fulness of the stature of the Evangelical Christ. A period of sixty-five years would be wholly inadequate for the purpose of effecting such a revolution. Changes far less great have required a much wider interval of time.

We appeal to fact. Although we do not know the length of time which the whole class of myths which together make up Grecian mythology took in their formation, it is certain that any appreciable advance in moral or religious thought,

from the fundamental conceptions of the Grecian mythic period to its next stage of progress, occupied a vastly longer interval of time than that which our mythic friends postulate for the elaboration of the Evangelical Jesus from its original Jewish type. Yet the interval which separates the former is as nothing compared with that which separates the latter.

It is equally certain that all subsequent developments of Grecian thought were separated from each other by wide intervals of time. It is also worthy of particular attention that these developments followed a common type of intellectual, moral, and religious idealization, and did not involve the creation of one fundamentally different. In this point of view they widely differ from the conditions necessary for the elaboration of the conception of the Jesus of the Evangelists.

During this period, it is also further evident, that the myths which were created, however varied they might be in form, presented an essential unity of type. They scarcely give any indications of progress, either in their religious or moral aspect. The whole portraiture, moral and religious, of the mythic Gods is of the same type and character, however varied it may be in form. They present us with no indications of growth in holiness, power, or any moral or spiritual attribute.

Similar was the character which the myths assigned to ideal men. They were embodiments of the moral conceptions of the mythic age, as to what formed the most exalted character of actual men. Beyond this ideal they display no indications of progress. Numerous as are the creations, they are dramatised with a uniformity of moral aspect. We must wait for the times of the later poets and philosophers before we can discern clear marks of progress in either their moral or their religious character.

If we examine all the other mythic periods of the ancient world, we shall find them distinguished by similar characteristics. Great changes in thought or feeling never grow out of those states of mind which generate myths. They produce nothing but fresh editions of them, only slightly deviating from the same type.

A wholly different influence from a mythic one is requisite to sap the foundations of established views of theology or morality. This can only be effected by one

diametrically opposite, the spirit of scepticism and inquiry. All the developments of the Greek mind were effected under this influence, which created a form of thought which sapped the spirit of mythology to its centre. Such changes were only effected after the lapse of very considerable periods. The narrow space of time which history will concede for its operations encumbers the mythic theory with another insuperable difficulty; the creators of the Christian mythology had not only to elaborate these myths but to procure belief in them, before they could proceed to generate myths of a higher order. Such a work had to be taken up by a fresh succession of mythologists. Instead of an interval of from forty-five to seventy-five years we require one of generations for such creations.

It must be admitted that the difference of thought, feeling, and idea between any state of the Jewish mind in existence in the year of the crucifixion and that which is embraced in the full conception of the Synoptic Gospels, is in its moral and religious aspect at least as great as separates that of the Grecian mythic period from the culmination of Greek philosophy. This latter development required a long interval of time for its completion; it had passed through numerous subordinate stages of growth; it was effected among a people more susceptible of rapid change than any other which ever existed. It took place when the myth-creating power had passed away. But the Jewish mind has been pre-eminently conservative of the conditions of the past.

If again we suppose a fusion of thought to have taken place, and out of that fusion to have sprung the state of mind, which, after passing through many intermediate stages, generated the Gospels, all experience requires us to postulate a long interval before the fusion could have been accomplished. Fusions have doubtless been the originators of considerable changes of thought, but they are only effected after a long course of years; and another long interval is requisite before fresh creations can grow out of them. History declares that a prolonged period of time is the indispensable condition of their successful operation.

A fusion of Orientalism, Judaism, and Grecism took place at Alexandria, and ultimately generated the Neo-

Platonic philosophy. The causes of this fusion, and the creation of a new element of thought out of it, extended over a far greater number of years than that which the maintainers of the mythic theory require for the elaboration of the Gospels. At the same time it must be observed that Neo-Platonism is separated from its parents by a distance which is inconsiderable, compared with that which lies between the full conception of the Christ and the primitive Judaism out of which it sprung. The development of Neo-Platonism was not effected by mythologists, but by men in whom the spirit of scepticism and inquiry was active.

If we measure the rate of development by that which has taken place in any subsequent period of the history of the Christian Church, we shall find the period of seventy years utterly inadequate for the development of the conception of the Christ out of its primitive Judaism. Let us take as an example the growth of Nicene out of Apostolical Christianity. This took 300 years to accomplish, and yet the interval of moral and religious thought which separates the one from the other is as nothing compared with that which separates the Gospels from that out of which they are alleged to have originated. The same is true of every great development which Christianity has passed through; for example, the formation of the conception of the theocratic Christ. If we use our opponents' own measure, and postulate fifty or sixty years as the time necessary to develop St. John out of the Synoptics, it will require several centuries to evolve the Synoptics out of Judaism.

We have shown that the fundamental principle on which the mythic theory rests is utterly untenable. But even if we could assume that it was a possible account of the origin of the Gospels, the short period which its advocates are forced to postulate as the only one which history concedes for its elaboration, utterly dissipates even this semblance of possibility. Contrary to the universal experience of history, and every scientific view of the laws of the development of the mind, it asks us to believe that the moral and religious interval which separates Judaism from the Christianity of the Synoptics was bridged over in a period which cannot be extended longer than sixty-five years.



But this interval, short as it is, must be greatly diminished. Even if it were conceded that it is impossible to prove that the Synoptic Gospels in their present form were in existence at an earlier period, we can adduce abundant evidence to show that all the great outlines of the Synoptic portraiture of the Christ, and even of that of the fourth Gospel, as well as the whole of their moral teaching, had long been current in the Christian Church.

It cannot be too carefully observed that the real question at issue in this argument is not whether the publication of the Gospels took place at an earlier or a later date, but at what period it can be proved that the portraiture of the Jesus was in existence, and well known in the Christian Church. The supporters of the mythic theory gain nothing by proving the late date of a Gospel, if it can be shown that that portraiture was in existence at a much earlier period.

The structure of the Synoptic Gospels affords decisive evidence that the complete portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists must have been in existence for a considerable time before the period which our opponents assign for their production. We have already observed that the whole structure of these Gospels leads to the conclusion that their contents must have been transmitted orally for a considerable number of years before they were reduced to writing. The whole of the parallel narrative and the discourses afford unquestionable evidences of this. It is impossible on any other supposition to account for the identities of expression embedded as they are in a mass of the most singular variations.

Now whether we consider the contents of our present Gospels as mythical or historical, it is evident that there must have been some original form of the story, in which each of the three Synoptic narratives had its origin. These are evidently three versions of a common original, whether it existed in a written or an oral form, from which the account in each Gospel must have been deflected in the course of transmission. The variations are precisely such as would arise in the course of oral transmission, if the primitive teachers of the Christian society used it for the purpose of giving instruction in the principles of Christianity.

If the Gospels are historical, the original form of the discourses must have been the actual utterances of our Lord, from which the different reports in the Synoptics are so many variations, which have sprung up in the course of time. In the same manner, if they are mythical, they must have sprung out of some original mythic story, which was free from the variations of our present Gospels. But the phenomena in question are not confined to the discourses. The narrative portions present indubitable marks of having at least partially originated out of a common story. The verbal resemblances are the evidences of this. The original witnesses would detail the facts of our Lord's life in their own language. The accounts of these by frequent repetition would in course of time assume a common form, and from this would originate the very singular variations which are to be found in our present narratives. These identities and variations with all their peculiarities exist in our Gospels, and must have originated somehow.

It is evident that if the discourses represent the actual utterances of our Lord, a very considerable time must have elapsed before they could have assumed their present form in the course of oral transmission. Such phenomena as they present could only have been the result of a very gradual growth. We may select as a good example the three-fold form of the parable of the householder, which we have already examined. The variations in this directly affect the form of the parable, and it is evident that they must have grown out of some original form of it, which was actually uttered by our Lord. Matthew differs from Mark and Luke as to the principle on which it is framed. Two very distinct forms of this parable must have existed in the Church, of which that in Matthew represents one, and those in Mark and Luke the other. These forms represent one stage of its oral transmission. But when we minutely examine the three-fold version, we find that it must have passed through some subordinate stages of growth. In some of its details, the account in Matthew presents a closer relation to that in Mark than it does to that in Luke, with which in its general form it is almost identical. Again, there are expressions in Luke's version which are more nearly allied to Matthew than to Mark. The whole of these variations are of such a peculiar

character as to imply that they must have taken several years in growing out of their original form. This parable is undoubtedly a remarkable example of the phenomena of which we speak; but the whole of the parallel discourses present us with variations of a similar character.

It is true that some of these discourses contain much less numerous variations than others. A few are nearly word for word alike. But even these present us with very striking phenomena confirmatory of the same view. We may select the account of our Lord's interview with Salome as an instance, in which the words attributed to our Lord by Matthew and Mark are all but identical in both Evangelists. But even here there is a systematic difference, which could only have grown up in the course of oral transmission. The one account is formed on the supposition that the dialogue took place between our Lord and Salome in the presence of her two sons, James and John. In the other, our Lord and James and John are the speakers, and no notice whatever is taken of Salome's presence. While the words uttered are all but identical, the grammatical form has been varied in conformity with the difference in the conception which exists in the two Evangelists, as to whether Salome, or James and John were the actual speakers. The original form of the narrative must have put the words into the mouth of Salome or those of James and John; and the two versions of the dialogue, with their characteristic sameness and divergencies, must have grown up in the course of transmission.

The more closely the parallel discourses are studied, the more remarkable these phenomena appear. They are of so peculiar a character as to suggest the idea that they must have taken years in their formation. Similar principles are applicable to the parallel narrative. A remarkable example of such variations and verbal agreements may be found in the account of the interview of the young ruler with our Lord, and its attendant circumstances; but the whole of the parallel narrative is filled with similar phenomena of a most striking character.

But if we assume that the contents of the Gospels are mythic, it does not affect the nature of our argument. It is self-evident that the different myths which they contain must have had an original form, out of which the variations

in our accounts of them must have grown. Take for example the parable of the householder to which we have already adverted. If we assume that our Lord never uttered it, but that it is a mythic parable which has been attributed to him by his followers, still it must have been set forth by somebody in an original form, from which our three versions in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are deviations. The same remark is applicable to the whole parallel narrative and to every one of the parallel discourses. The deviations contained in the Gospels must have required a considerable interval of time for their elaboration.

It follows therefore, as a necessary consequence, that the whole contents of our Gospels must have been in existence for a considerable number of years prior to the date which our opponents assign for their composition. Whether they existed in an oral form, or partly oral and partly written, will not affect our argument. It is no less clear that the complete portraiture of our Lord must have been elaborated at a still earlier period. The interval of time, therefore, which the supporters of the mythic theory have at their command for its elaboration must on their own principles be considerably reduced.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE EVIDENCE AFFORDED BY THE EPISTLES FOR THE EARLY EXISTENCE OF THE PORTRAITURE OF THE CHRIST.

WE have hitherto been reasoning on the principle of conceding the interval of time which the advocates of the mythic theory demand. This concession we must now revoke.

The attempt to prove that St. John's Gospel was not in existence before the year 150 must be pronounced a failure. It is incredible that the writers of that age who recognized it as a genuine production of the Apostle would have done so, if they had never heard of it until a few years previous to the time when they wrote. It is past all belief that those who had conversed with persons who had been con-

temporaries of the Apostle, should at once have accepted it as his, without troubling themselves to inquire whether they had previously heard of it.

Similar considerations will show that the Synoptic Gospels must have been in existence prior to the year 100.

But the question of the actual date of the Gospels, as we have said, is one of subordinate importance. The evidence which proves that they were in existence in all their leading details, if not in their present form, at a much earlier period, is of a most conclusive character. We can trace the existence of the great outline of both the Synoptic and Johannean conception of the Christ till within less than twenty-five years after the crucifixion. If it did not exist in the form of a written Gospel, it existed in that of an oral one, well known to the Church. Of this St. Paul's Epistles alone afford conclusive evidence. They prove that the Churches were well acquainted with all the great features of the conception of the Christ, as we read them in the Synoptics and St. John, in its spiritual and moral bearings, as well as in its general portraiture.

The earlier existence of these general details deprives the mythic theory, and every form of it, of even a semblance of probability. If we can trace them up to the time of Paul as being then generally current, we can trace them up to within a few years of the origin of Christianity itself, for in St. Paul's Epistles they appear not in an incipient but in a developed state. If such is the case the mere question of date becomes one of little importance. The mythic theory is crushed under the weight of its own intrinsic absurdity.

We are quite ready to concede that several of the alleged references to the Evangelical story, which are found in the earlier Christian writers, are not made in such terms as to prove that those who made them had the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, or Luke actually in their hands in the existing form in which we read them. They render us, however, a far more important service. Had they quoted them so as to prove the existence of each separate Gospel, that Gospel might have been known only to the writer. But it is evident that if these references are not actually made to a definite written Gospel, they are references to a story fully current in the Christian Society of exactly a similar



character. It matters little what was the form of the story. The passages in question afford the most unequivocal proof that it was of precisely the same character as those contained in the Synoptics. It might have been wholly oral, or partly oral and partly written, or entirely the latter; but whatever it was, the references bear as strong a relation to the story contained in our existing Gospels, as one or two bones of an animal to the animal itself. From the latter a naturalist can determine the whole character of the animal to which they belonged, and can reconstruct it. Equally strong is the evidence borne by the references of the earliest Christian writers to the existence of a story current in the Christian Society, of precisely the same general aspect as that presented to us by the Evangelists. This, therefore, will prove that the general features of the Christ of the Synoptics were fully known in the Christian Church many years earlier than the date which the maintainers of the mythic theory postulate for the publication of the Synoptics.

In the absence of earlier Christian authorities the maintainers of this theory refuse to allow us to appeal to the Acts of the Apostles as an historical document. This they have attempted to banish into the region of myths, perhaps even of directly conscious frauds. We can well afford to dispense with its testimony.

But there are four Epistles of St. Paul the genuineness of which the most eager denier of the historical character of the Gospels has not yet ventured to dispute. By the aid of these epistles we shall be able to show that all the main features of the Messianic conception, as they appear in our Gospels, were in existence within twenty-five years after the crucifixion, and even at a still earlier period.

We shall likewise assume that several of the others are unquestionably genuine, and that even the Epistle to the Hebrews, though probably not Paul's, is a product of the Apostolic age, and that the so-called Catholic epistles are products of the same age. These will afford us no doubtful evidence that all the great features of the Synoptic Christ, and many of those of the Christ of St. John, were in existence and current in the Church at the time when those letters were written, and had been so for several years previously.

This consideration, in addition to those which we have already adduced, will prove that the greatest of all myths which ever have been created by the mind of man is the mythic theory, as affording any rational account of the origin of the conception and portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels, and of the morality which they represent him to have taught.

We must, therefore, ascertain what indications the Epistles present us of the existence of a story in which our Lord was made to wear a similar portraiture to that in which he is presented to us in the Gospels.

The Epistle to the Romans was written by St. Paul to a Church which he had never visited. It pre-supposes certain facts in connection with the history of Christ which formed the groundwork of the belief of the Apostle, and of those to whom he wrote. On this supposition the whole Epistle is based. It affords, therefore, the strongest proof that the conceptions of the Christ, which it contains, were not an invention of St. Paul but were acquiesced in and accepted by this distant Christian community.

This Church was also a numerous one, and contained both a Jewish and a Gentile element. Both parties must have concurred in their views respecting the person, teaching, and morality of Christ. It evidently never occurred to the writer of the epistle that there were two different sets of opinions in the Church on this subject, or that his references to it could be called in question.

The allusions in this epistle are not only a witness of the current belief respecting the character of our Lord at the time when it was written, but they help us to identify it as actually in existence within a few years of the ascension.

But the evidence which they supply is even yet stronger. In the Roman Church were two persons whom the Apostle describes as having been Christians before himself. He pre-supposes that they would assent to the truth of his Christology. It was therefore no newly invented doctrine when he wrote. Whatever hints this epistle affords as to the story current in the Church are evidence that it had been elaborated a considerable number of years before it was committed to writing.

The Apostle's first allusion to the current narrative is the assertion that the Messiah was recognized by himself and those to whom he wrote as the Son of God. (Rom. i. 3.) This is followed by a direct allusion to another point in that belief, namely, that he was of the seed of David, evidently alluding to a story similar to that in the Evangelists.

But the Apostle's allusion contains another important reference to the Messianic character which was already ascribed to Jesus. He tells the Romans that he wrote to them "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was of the seed of David according to the flesh: and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Now whatever interpretation we may put on the latter clause of this sentence, "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," the whole passage makes it evident that neither did the Roman Church nor St. Paul believe in a purely human Jesus. He had already assumed a divine character. If he had not, the words, "Son of David according to the flesh," are meaningless. A belief must have been already current in the Church of the story of his miraculous conception, as it is stated in St. Matthew and St. Luke. He must have been represented in some sense as the Son of Man and the Son of God.

Christ's Lordship over the Church is again and again distinctly recognized. This involves most important consequences as to the nature of the Messianic portraiture which was recognized in the Church at Rome. We are also informed that St. Paul had a subject to preach which he designated "the Gospel of Christ," and that it contained a body of distinctive truth, so that it could be asserted of it, that it contained a revelation of the righteousness of God. (Rom. i. 16, 17.)

We also learn that in the form of the Gospel story, as it was received in the Church at Rome, the fact that God would judge the secrets of men by Christ occupied an important place. The words of the Apostle are remarkable: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to MY Gospel." They imply that St. Paul had a definite body of truths which he designated "his

Gospel." Among these were certain statements respecting the office of Jesus as the future Judge of the world, which must have been in the closest agreement with the declarations attributed to him by our present Evangelists. In this respect the Christology of the Gospels and of the Church at Rome must have been the same. The principles on which St. Paul describes him as intending to execute judgment are exactly the same as those attributed to him in the Synoptics; and the nature of his delegated authority, with that in the fourth Gospel.

The Epistle in numerous passages, but especially in the fifth and sixth chapters, contains the clearest references to a well-known story of Christ's death. In the eyes of the Apostle and of those to whom he wrote it was no common or mere martyr's death. It contained an exhibition of the highest form of love; it was voluntarily undergone, and was viewed by the Apostle and those to whom he wrote as being the means of man's reconciliation with God. Every reference to it implies that the Roman Church was well acquainted with a story entirely kindred to that contained in our present Gospels.

When the Apostle wrote, the human aspect of our Lord's character had been so developed, that he was viewed as the second Adam, the antitype of the first progenitor of the human family. (Rom. v. 14—19.)

The existence of such a conception is evidence that there was an acknowledged portraiture of our Lord in the human aspect of his character in which he must have been dramatised as the faultless Son of Man. He is exhibited throughout the passage as in every respect more perfect than the prototype.

A doctrine about Baptism was distinctly recognized by the Apostle and those to whom he wrote. (Rom. vi. 4, &c.) This doctrine bore a distinct reference to the death and resurrection of Christ. In that death and resurrection the Apostle recognized the groundwork of all Christian motivity.

The epistle again and again recognizes that the conception of the Messiah had been fully framed as the source of spiritual and eternal life to man. (Rom. viii.) According to the writer's views every spiritual blessing flows to man through Jesus the Christ. (Rom. v.)

The eighth chapter of this epistle distinctly recognizes that views respecting the Divine Spirit had been already fully elaborated, precisely similar to those which we read in the fourth Gospel. Of these influences the Messiah is represented as being the source. In these particulars no practical advance was made in Christian idealization during the wide interval between the time of the composition of this epistle and the alleged date of the fourth Gospel. It follows therefore that this portion of the Johannean type of thought must have been fully developed within twenty-five years of the resurrection.

The whole aspect of Christian morality is precisely the same as that contained in the Gospels; and precisely the same views must have been taken of the relative nature of different virtues. (Rom. xii. &c.) It is impossible to read the Apostle's teaching on this subject without seeing that it is founded on the moral teaching of our Lord as exhibited in the Gospels, and is a direct reference to it.

It follows therefore, that the peculiar aspects of morality presented by the Gospels must have been fully developed when the Apostle wrote the epistle, and must have been recognized by all parties in the Roman Church as being beyond all dispute the morality of Christ.

The conception had been already developed, that Christ's person constitutes the great fulcrum of all moral power. (Rom. xii. 1.) The epistle also bears undeniable witness that there was already in existence a portraiture of the character of the Messiah in the person of Jesus, so well defined as to admit of a reference to it as the model of all Christian practice. Christians are exhorted "to put that character on." (Rom. xiii. 14.) As the Apostle gives no description of it, such an exhortation affords the clearest proof that there was already recognized by all parties in the Church a well known type of our Lord's character.

The Messianic conception in the person of Jesus (Rom. xiv. 7, 9) was also so fully developed and recognized by all parties in the Church as to make the Apostle feel that those to whom he wrote would recognize him as the Lord of the human conscience. The Apostle describes Christians as living to him and dying to him; and that he died and rose for the express purpose that he might become Lord of the dead and living.



The Apostle also distinctly recognizes that it was a well known fact in the Church, that our Lord had taught, contrary to the general belief of the age, the utter inefficacy of particular meats to make a man morally better or worse. (Rom. xiv.) The Apostle's statements on this point show an entire agreement between his teaching and that reported in the Gospels, and prove that that in the Gospels was well known.

The aspect in which the portraiture of Jesus had been presented to St. Paul and the Roman Christians was that of one who throughout his whole life had been no self-pleaser. (Rom. xv. 3.) The mode in which this is referred to proves that there was a well-known outline of our Lord's life of which one of the most characteristic aspects was the entire absence of selfishness. It follows therefore, that a portraiture of Jesus had been already dramatised, in which he was exhibited in strict conformity with the mode in which he is depicted in the Gospels.

Another recognized aspect of the received story was, that the purely unselfish Jesus had been made the subject of bitter reproach. Both these aspects of his character were so clearly developed that the Apostle could refer to them as a well known pattern, in conformity with which all Christians ought to fashion themselves. It was, therefore, not only fully recognized by the Church, but it could have been no recent invention.

In Rom. xv. 5, we have another very important reference to certain well-known moral features in our Lord's human character. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus." Such words could only have been written by one who was persuaded that the Christians at Rome had before them a general outline of the facts of our Lord's life on which both he and they were at a substantial agreement. They were to be "*like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus.*" Such an exhortation would be meaningless unless the persons to whom it was addressed had before them a well-defined outline of our Lord's moral character, bearing a considerable similarity to that which we see depicted in the Evangelists. "According to Christ Jesus" can mean nothing less than according to his teaching and practice.

Lastly, the epistle bears distinct witness to the fact that there was in existence a dramatized representation of our Lord's life. "Now to him," says the Apostle, "who is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ." (xvi. 25.)

The formal reference of St. Paul to "my Gospel" left it in some degree doubtful, whether by such an expression he meant to refer to a system of doctrines, or to a body of facts. These words preclude all doubt that certain statements respecting our Lord's life and teaching were included in it. The expression, "according to the preaching of Jesus Christ," must refer to something which was well known to those to whom he wrote. It is evident that he considered that it would recall vividly to their minds certain facts in connection with our Lord. We have passages in our Gospels in strict agreement with the references of the Apostle.

Equally distinct is the evidence afforded by the two Epistles to the Corinthians. The references are numerous to those points which we have referred to in the Epistle to the Romans; but we shall pass over those common to it, unless there is a peculiar reason for drawing attention to them.

The first reference is where the Apostle represents the person of Christ as being the great antidote against the spirit of party which prevailed in the Corinthian Church. (1 Cor. i. 13.) This precisely harmonises with those peculiar aspects of his person and teaching which are exhibited to us in the fourth Gospel.

The Apostle recognizes, as a well known fact, that peculiar aspect of the Jewish character which is so prominent in the Gospels, and which our Lord is represented as so frequently rebuking, and refusing to gratify, viz., its tendency to demand signs and prodigies as evidences of religious truth. "The Jews desire a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom."

That peculiar aspect of the portraiture of Christ as the elevator of the humbler virtues to a higher rank than they occupied in existing religious systems is fully recognized, and also the great truth that all outward distinctions were abolished in his person. (i. 13-31.)

Numerous passages in this epistle afford us direct evidence that an aspect of our Lord's portraiture as we

find it exhibited in the fourth Gospel had been already fully developed, and acknowledged by the Church. In proof of it, it will be superfluous to cite more than a single passage: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (i. 30.)

The crucifixion of the Messiah is also recognized as constituting a most important element in his portraiture in the eyes of the Apostle. (i. 23.) Also the fact that there was a known body of truth which could be designated as "The mind of Christ," (ii. 16.) which the Apostle asserts that the Church was in possession of. Such an expression can only refer to a body of truth which was recognized as the teaching of our Lord. It is quite unimportant for our argument whether it was written or oral. Such a body of truth we have in our existing Gospels.

We learn also from this epistle that when it was written there was a distinction between different classes of Christian truth. There was a higher and a lower truth suited for hearers in different states of religious maturity. "I have fed you with milk," says the Apostle, "and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." (iii. 2.) During the Apostle's visit to Corinth he had hitherto chiefly dwelt on the latter, and he doubted the present ability of the Corinthian Church to bear anything of a higher character.

This is a very remarkable testimony. This distinction between a higher and a lower order of Christian truth, thus distinctly asserted by St. Paul as existing when he preached at Corinth, is a very close approximation to that which constitutes the difference in character between the Synoptics and the fourth Gospel. Yet this distinction must have been in existence within twenty-five years of the crucifixion.

The fact also that Christian teachers dwelt largely on a well-known portraiture of Christ, which contained minor differences of detail is fully recognized. "Though ye have ten thousand instructors IN CHRIST," says the Apostle, "yet have ye not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus have I begotten you all through the Gospel." (iv. 15.)

The Messiah's person is here evidently recognized as the great subject of Christian teaching. The numerous teachers

presented it with some modifications of view. But in the midst of these modifications it presented a general unity of aspect. These instructors were *instructors in Christ*. The Apostle also bears witness to the existence of a well-defined body of truths connected with Christ's person, which he designates as "His ways in Christ Jesus, which he taught everywhere in every Church."

According to another statement of the Apostle the idea that the death of Christ was the Christian Passover had been already fully developed. (v. 6, 7.) "For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast." From the mode in which this assertion is made, it is evident that the Apostle knew that it would receive the general acceptance of all the numerous parties in the Corinthian Church.

The Messianic conception of St. Paul, and according to his witness that of the Corinthian Church, exactly corresponded with certain aspects of it which are presented to us in the fourth Gospel. Christians had "One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things and we *through him*." (1 Cor. viii. 6.)

These words are an abridgment of the theology of St. John, as to the relationship in which the Logos stands to the Father and the Universe. St. Paul's epistles contain numerous similar representations.

The wounding of the consciences of weak brethren is described as sinning against Christ. (viii. 12.) This conception of the Messianic character presents a striking analogy to that aspect of it which is found in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, which represents the doing or the omission of acts of love to Christ's brethren as done or omitted to himself. This conception was therefore fully developed as early as the date of this epistle; and from the nature of the reference to it, it is clear that it was not a new one.

It will be evident to the careful reader of his instructions respecting the maintenance of the Christian ministry (ix.) that St. Paul must have been in possession of sayings of Christ on that subject of precisely the same nature as those in our present Gospels. He even refers to one of them, "The labourer is worthy of his hire," as Scripture; thus

affording a proof not only that an oral account of the life of Christ existed, but that it had been reduced to writing at least in fragments at the time of the composition of the epistle, and that such fragments he did not hesitate to designate as Scripture.

This epistle also furnishes us with an example of the general style of the narrative of the life of Christ as the Apostle was in the habit of teaching it in the Church. (xi. 25—34.) Judging from this example he must have taught an oral Gospel of an enlarged form, and of as great or greater minuteness of detail as that of any of our existing Gospels. We have from his pen the fullest of all the accounts of the institution of the Lord's supper, and of the purposes sought to be effected by it.

The facts of the institution the Apostle affirms that he received from the Lord and delivered to the Church. The account differs in some respects from that contained in either of our Gospels. It presents so formal an aspect, that taken in connection with the other passages which we have been considering, it forces on us the conclusion that there were other portions of the Evangelical history which had already attained their fullest development; that they had been fully detailed by him; and that they constituted the milk with which he had fed the Corinthian Church throughout the early stages of its growth. The narrative in question is not only stated to have been received from the Lord, but to have been *delivered unto them*. This certainly implies some formal act, and that it constituted an acknowledged body of truth.

The Apostle's picture of charity is the very ideal of our Lord's human character as it is dramatised in the Gospels, and pre-supposes an intimate and minute acquaintance with it.

The opening of chapter xv. distinctly recognizes the fact that a considerable portion of St. Paul's teaching at Corinth was occupied with the details, whether mythic or otherwise, of what he supposed had been the actual life of Jesus. The passage is a very remarkable one, as bearing on the present question. In it he reminds the Corinthians that the Gospel which he had preached to them had consisted chiefly of facts, among which those connected with our Lord's death and resurrection occupied a prominent place. He then enumerates the chief



facts on which the evidence of his resurrection rested, and introduces into his account events which are not mentioned in either of our existing Gospels. The mode in which this statement is made implies that it composed only a portion of the details respecting our Lord's person, which he has described as the Gospel which he preached, which the Corinthians had received, and in which they stood.

This passage, therefore, proves that the Apostle and his hearers recognized the existence, as the ground-work of their faith, of a body of details respecting the life of Christ, which had already assumed a determinate form, and, whether legendary or historical, as far as these epistles afford traces of them, had already been wrought up into a form which must have borne a near resemblance to that contained in our present Gospels.

It also affords distinct evidence that the Gospel, as it was preached by Paul, was one which consisted of details of supposed fact, as much as it did of a body of dogmas: or rather that the dogmatic views were embodied in the facts. The inference is irresistible, that a great portraiture of Jesus must have been already in existence, of substantially the same character as that which is contained in our present Gospels.\*

We learn from the second Epistle that a portraiture of the sufferings of Christ had been already elaborated, of so distinctive a character that it could be appealed to as

\* Our version hardly does full justice to the passage. We will therefore quote the Greek. *Γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, ὃ καὶ παρελάβετε. ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐστήκατε. Δι' οὗ καὶ σώζεσθε, τινι λόγῳ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, εἰ κατέχετε· ἐκτός εἰ μὴ εἰκῇ ἐπιστεύσατε. Παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις ὃ καὶ παρέλαβον ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, κτλ.* The Apostle states, that in consequence of the principles springing up in the Church, he makes known to them over again the principles of the Gospel, which he had previously preached to the Corinthians, which they also had received, on which they also stood, through which they were also saved, as long as they adhered to them firmly. He then tells them that among the things of prime importance (*ἐν πρώτοις*) in the Gospel which he had delivered to them, were the facts of Christ's death and resurrection, &c., which facts he had received from the Lord. The whole passage makes it evident that the Pauline Gospel was one largely composed of facts, and that these facts were details of our Lord's life, kindred to those contained in our present Gospels.

affording a ground for human sympathy (2 Cor. i.), and that the character had been so dramatised as to be a confirmation of the firmness and immutability of the divine promises. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ—and our hope of you is stedfast, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation," &c. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Sylvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." (i. 19, 20.)

The language of these passages is only consistent with the fact that the Apostolic preachers endeavoured to present their hearers with a portraiture of the character of our Lord. The personal Son of God, Jesus the Christ, was preached by them to the Corinthian Church.

The Apostle represents that the Spirit which Christians had received was an earnest and pledge of something better. (i. 22.) Here again his theology coincides with that which St. John puts into the mouth of Christ in his last discourse to his disciples.

In the portraiture of the Christ with which St. Paul was acquainted the attribute of forgiveness formed a distinguished characteristic. "For if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ." (ii. 10.) Christ's whole moral character constituted one which was pre-eminently glorious. "For we all with open face beholding as in a glass (by means of a mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (iii. 18.)

The Apostle, although he does not directly assert the Logos doctrine in the precise form in which it is exhibited by St. John, advances one which bears a close resemblance to it. Jesus the Messiah, according to his view, is the image of God. (iv. 4.) Thus early were developed the more advanced views of the Johannean Gospel.

We have also a similar aspect of thought in the expression: "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This not only agrees with the type of thought found in the fourth Gospel, but

proves that there was a well known portraiture of Jesus in which the light of the glory of God was exhibited as shining in him.

But the portraiture of the Jesus of St. Paul was not a mere exhibition of the attributes of mildness and mercy. There was one aspect of it which was capable of inspiring terror. (2 Cor. v. 11.) "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." This exactly agrees with the aspect in which he is depicted in the Synoptics in reference to Phariseeism. But the merciful aspect of his character was the predominant one, so much so that it formed a constraining power, prompting to the act of an entire self-surrender of all man's faculties to his service. "The love of Christ constraineth us," &c.

Remarkable as is this union of terror and loveliness in the same person, it is precisely the character in which our Lord is dramatised by the Evangelists.

In 2 Cor. v. we recognize the presence of a very advanced Christology, not less so than that contained in the fourth Gospel. According to the Apostle's views of the Messianic Jesus, he not only reconciled the world to God by his death, but God was in him reconciling the world unto Himself. No less clearly is the absolute unselfishness of our Lord's character asserted than it is by St. John.

The Apostle speaks of the human life of the divine Jesus as having been exhibited in one of poverty (viii. 9), while he had been previously in a state of riches, as a well known representation of the belief respecting him which had been long current in the Christian Church. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

We learn also that the recognized type in which the character of Jesus had been already moulded was one of pre-eminent meekness and gentleness. (2 Cor. x. 1.) This was so generally acknowledged that it could be made a subject of appeal even to the parties in the Corinthian Church who were hostile to the Apostle: "I beseech you," he says, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." The dramatisation of it must therefore have borne substantially the same aspect in the mythic stories current in the Apostle's time as that which we find actually embodied in

our Evangelists. If the fourth Gospel was published as late as it is contended, this aspect of the conception of the Christ could have received no improvement in a period little short of a century. This affords proof that mythic creations of this description progress but slowly towards perfection.

In the twelfth chapter of the same epistle the Apostle informs us that he received a direct revelation from Christ, in which he was encouraged by an assurance that "the strength of Christ was made perfect in weakness." We need hardly draw attention to the fact that this is the precise aspect of his portraiture as it is exhibited in the Evangelists.

These three Epistles establish, on the clearest evidence, the existence of a portraiture of Christ substantially the same as that presented by our Gospels. From the next Epistle, that to the Galatians, we learn that a body of Jewish teachers existed in the Church who set forth the Gospel in a different aspect from that which was exhibited by St. Paul, and acquiesced in by the two powerful churches to which the three preceding epistles were addressed. The question, therefore, is of the greatest importance whether this version of the Gospel consisted of a different class of facts or myths from that which was taught by St. Paul; or whether the difference consisted in giving a greater prominence to a portion of them, or in drawing a different doctrinal inference from the same facts.

In whatever the distinction between them consisted, it is certain that the Gospel which was set forth by these teachers presented an essentially Jewish aspect, and that it must have contemplated the person of our Lord from a Jewish point of view.

It may be objected that as St. Paul is here dealing with a version of the Gospel to which he was opposed, his representations of its nature may not be trustworthy.

To this we reply, that the nature of the teaching which the Apostle combated was well known in the Galatian churches at the time when they received his letter. If, therefore, the Apostle had been disposed to give a coloured view of the Gospel of his opponents it could not have served his purpose to have attempted it. This epistle, in which he is engaged in vehement contest with them, was intended

to be read in an assembly, where, even if those teachers were not actually present, there were certain to be many of their adherents. If, therefore, the epistle had misrepresented their opinions he would have been subject to instant confutation.

The first intimation which the epistle gives us of the nature of this Gospel is a very remarkable one. (Galat. i. 6.) St. Paul distinctly designates it as "another Gospel." But at the very moment he uses these words, which taken by themselves would be quite consistent with the idea that its supposed contents were of an entirely different character from the Gospel which was taught by Paul, he expressly declares that there was a sense in which it was not another. "I marvel," says he, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, *unto another Gospel; which is not another*: but there are some which trouble you, and would subvert *the Gospel of Christ*."

Now these words certainly imply that the "other Gospel" consisted of the same facts or myths as the Pauline. It was another and yet not another." Such words are a description not of a fundamental difference in character, but of a version of the Gospel which deduced different inferences and put a different colouring on the same facts.

It further appears that both St. Paul and his opponents recognized a something which they designated as "the Gospel of Christ." Occurring as this expression does in the same context as the other, it appears to refer to a common ground which was viewed as such by both parties. St. Paul avers that his opponents were guilty of perverting it. They probably retorted the charge on the Apostle.

Now this is precisely the language which would be used of each other by opposite parties, who had the same data before them, but took an opposite view of the inferences flowing from them. The Judaizers would naturally force into undue prominence such portions of the Gospel story as were favourable to their own opinions.

This is precisely what may be done with our present Gospels. If we were to keep large portions of them out of sight, and lay the main stress on others, it would be no difficult matter to construct a Gospel which should bear a strongly Jewish aspect. This could easily be done, without the insertion of a single additional myth.



The conduct of religious controversialists is a striking illustration of what we mean. They do not undertake to expurgate the Scriptures, but they pass over in silence what is opposed to them. Of this the predestinarian controversy is a remarkable instance.

Every word used by the Apostle in this epistle implies that the "other Gospel" of his opponents was not a Gospel largely made up of mythical additions of another type, nor even an expurgated Gospel, but one which gave a different colouring to a body of facts which formed the groundwork of the belief of both parties.

The Pauline Gospel (Gal. i. 11, 12) was one "not after man," "neither," as the Apostle says, "did he receive it from man, nor was he taught it by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." After making this statement as to the source whence it was derived, he refers to his well known Judaism previously to his conversion. He then proceeds, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, *that I might preach him among the heathen*, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood," &c.

These words are evidently intended to designate the main difference between the Pauline Gospel and that of his opponents: "It pleased God," says he, "to reveal his Son in me, *that I might preach him among the heathen*." The difference between the revelation which St. Paul imagined that he had received and the views promulgated by his opponents respected the duty of preaching Christ to the Gentiles.

The other Gospel then must have been a Jewish version of the Evangelical history, and have consisted of such portions of it as were suited to give to the portraiture of Jesus the aspect of a Messiah who should realize the aspirations of Judaism.

It may be urged that the fact that St. Paul believed that he had derived his knowledge of the Gospel from an immediate divine revelation, favours the idea that it was composed of a set of myths of a different type from those which were previously in existence. But the epistles above referred to have clearly demonstrated that the Pauline Gospel was accepted in all its main facts

in Churches which contained a large admixture of the Jewish element.

The whole aspect of the remarks of the Apostle makes it evident that when he asserted that he derived his knowledge of Christianity from divine revelation, he was not so much referring to the facts themselves, as to his mode of interpreting them. It was in this latter alone that the difference rested. This is clearly proved by the account which he gives of his visit to Jerusalem fifteen years after his conversion. On this occasion he made a formal communication of the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles to the rulers of the Jewish Church. (Gal. ii.) His statement shows that he had no fear that there would be any difference between himself and these leaders as to the facts which he taught as constituting the life of Christ, but as to the view which might be taken of the nature of the Jewish institutions in connection with Christianity.

The points at issue were not historical facts, but the necessity of circumcision and the observance of the Jewish law. He informs the Galatians that these were decided in his favour by its being left free to his companion Titus, an avowed Gentile, to continue uncircumcised.

We have another remarkable testimony to the same effect. The Apostle tells us that when the chiefs of the Jewish Church "perceived that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to him as that of the circumcision was to Peter," and when James, Cephas, and John perceived the grace given to him, they gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that they should go to the heathen, while the others continued preaching to the Jews. These words make it evident that there must have been a Gospel common to both parties in the Church, and that the differences which existed respected the question whether Christ's Messianic kingdom embraced Jews and Gentiles alike, or whether it was necessary that the latter should seek admission to it through the pale of Judaism. The same result follows from the account which the Apostle gives of his contest with St. Peter. The difference between them was not one of facts, but of doctrines. The very terms of the rebuke imply that they both entertained the same views respecting the moral and religious portraiture of their Master.

The Gospel which St. Paul preached to the Galatians, and to the belief of which he thought that they still adhered, contained a very full account of the crucifixion. The account depicted that event in a very lively form, amounting to a graphic word-painting. It is thus described by the Apostle, "*Before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you.*" (Gal. iii. 1.) Such an expression implies nothing less than that a full delineation of the bearing of the Saviour under his sufferings, drawn as vividly as in our present Gospels, was well known in the Galatian Church.

It is evident from this expression that the Apostle's Gospel consisted largely of details of supposed facts.

In Gal. iii. 27, occurs the following passage, "As many of you as have been baptized into Jesus Christ have put on Christ." These words pre-suppose a fully recognized aspect of the morality and character of Christ which was held in common by the Apostle and his opponents. He reminds them that by their profession as Christians they had arrayed themselves in Christ's character, and pledged themselves to assume it as their appropriate dress. It is evident, therefore, that the Church must have possessed a distinct portraiture of our Lord's character.

The Apostle presupposes that both parties in the Church would recognize the following delineation of the person of the Messiah as that in which they both believed: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons: and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galat. iv. 4-6)

These passages make it evident that the Galatian Church believed in a Christ who was both divine and human. The fact of the incarnation is distinctly implied, and the doctrines of the fourth Gospel respecting the Divine Spirit are distinctly asserted. These aspects of the Messiah's character must therefore have been fully developed as early as the date of this epistle.

The Apostle's enumeration of the works of the flesh and of the fruits of the Spirit proves that all the parties in this Church admitted the latter as the ideal of Christian

morality. They exhibit exactly the same aspect of morality in all its peculiarities as it is presented to us in the Gospels. It follows, therefore, that the ideal of morality which elevated the humbler at the expense of the more heroic virtues was already that which was accepted as the true exhibition of Christ's teaching, by all parties in the Church.

These four Epistles, which even the utmost efforts of criticism have respected as the genuine productions of St. Paul, afford the most distinct evidence that there must have been in existence in the Church within less than twenty-five years after the resurrection a portraiture of Christ, in which all the main features of his character had been elaborated with as much distinctness as they are in the pages of the Evangelists. The question, as to whether it was in the form of a written or an oral Gospel does not affect our argument.

The Epistle to the Galatians no less clearly proves the existence of a party in the Church opposed to the Pauline views, and which called in question his right to be considered an Apostle. Still, however, it does not afford a single hint that this party set forth a different set of facts or fictions as the foundation of their own religious belief. The difference between them and the Apostle was a doctrinal one, and as far as the evidence furnished by the epistle goes, it proves that both parties rested on the same fundamental groundwork.

But while we have used the four unquestioned epistles of St. Paul for the purpose of proving the existence of this great Messianic portraiture at this early period of the history of the Church, we have no intention of foregoing the evidence supplied by the remainder of his epistles, and the other writings of the New Testament in favour of the same position. If they are genuine, the evidence furnished by them can be only a few years later in date than that which we have been considering. If our opponents refuse to admit their genuineness, they cannot avoid conceding that they are writings of a very early period. As such they will corroborate the evidence which we have already adduced of the early elaboration of the complete portraiture of the Christ. These evidences will also be important as proving that the different sections of the Christian Church were acquainted with no other tradition.

The Epistle to the Ephesians, being intensely doctrinal, contains hardly any allusion to the human aspect of our Lord's person, except to his death and resurrection. It dwells chiefly on the glorified side of the Messianic character. Here the delineation of it is complete.

We find the Messianic conception exhibited in Jesus in the following form: All spiritual blessings are conceived of as existing in him (Ephes. i. 3). Christians are adopted by God in Jesus the Messiah (5). They are accepted in him (6). In his blood they have redemption (7). All things hereafter will be summed up in one in him, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven (10). Christians have their inheritance in him (11), and are sealed with the holy Spirit of promise (13), and possess all wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (18). He is now exalted to the greatest height of dignity in both worlds; he is the head of the Church, and fills all in all.

Such a divine Christ has become the quickener of sinful men to a new state of spiritual life. In him those who were dead in sin have been raised up and made to sit in heavenly places (ii. 1, 3, 5). They are created in Jesus the Messiah unto good works (10), and are made near to God by his blood (13). In him all distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished, and through him believers of both descriptions have access by one Spirit unto the Father (18). The Messiah possesses a store of unsearchable riches treasured up in his person (iii. 8); and all things were created through Jesus the Christ (9). These passages afford the most decisive evidence that when this epistle was written, the conception of the divine aspect of the Messiah's person must have been already completely developed in the Church. The writer is not writing in the style of one who is announcing such truths for the first time, but he evidently calculates that those to whom he is writing will not only understand his doctrines, but sympathize with them. It is evident, therefore, that they must have been imbued with them for a very considerable period. They are exhibited not only as the opinions of the author, but as having for a considerable period obtained acceptance in the Church.

Unless we are prepared to refer this epistle to the end of the first half of the second century, it is a lost labour on



the part of the supporters of the mythic theory to attempt to prove that the fourth Gospel could not have been composed before that period. The divine character of the Christology of this epistle, though not precisely the same as that of the Gospel, fully equals or even exceeds it, as far as it can be regarded as an expansion of a human Jesus into a divine form, as a development of primitive Jewish Messianic conceptions.

The epistle, however, contains one distinct allusion to the aspect of human holiness as it was exhibited in the person of our Lord. The Apostle, after reminding them of the unholy works of their Gentile state, adds, "Ye have not so learned the Messiah, if so be that ye have heard him and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, &c., and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created unto righteousness and true holiness."

This passage distinctly asserts that it was possible so to learn the Messiah, that he might be an example of holiness. The truth in Jesus was an exhibition of this aspect of the Messiah's character. In this Christians might vest themselves as in a spiritual dress. The truth in Jesus, therefore, must have been a well-known portraiture of the holiness of our Lord, to which it was the duty of Christians to endeavour to conform themselves.

The Epistle to the Philippians is in its aspect unquestionably Pauline; and if a forgery the person who invented it must have been an adept at his art. Such allusions as this short letter contains are of the same kind as those of his uncontested writings. Of these it will be only necessary to notice two.

The first of these is the well-known passage (Phil. ii. 5) concerning the divine and human aspect of the person of Christ, in which his humiliation is referred to as a fact of history, so generally acknowledged that it was needless to enter into details respecting it. The second is that in which the Apostle states that his concentrated efforts were directed to the attainment of "a knowledge of Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." (iii. 10.) A knowledge of this kind implies an eager desire to attain a conformity with a well-known pattern. It therefore pre-supposes the existence of a portraiture of

Christ, which it was possible to make the subject of religious contemplation.

The aspect of the Epistle to the Colossians very closely approximates to that to the Ephesians. The passage, Col. i. 15, requires notice as being the most distinct delineation of the divine and human character combined in the person of Jesus to be found in the New Testament, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature," &c.

Another passage distinctly proves the existence of a substantial account of the actions and the morality of Christ, which also represented him as the ground of all Christian motivity, and which could be made the subject of imitation. (Col. ii. 6.) "As ye, therefore, have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught."

The Apostle here speaks of receiving Christ and walking in him. This last expression plainly means using him as an example. It is obvious, therefore, that when he speaks of "receiving Christ Jesus the Lord," he must refer to a definite portraiture of his character, which had formed a distinct feature in their Christian instruction: "The faith as ye have been taught." But as he exhorted them to be rooted and built up in him, it is obvious that he must not only have referred to our Lord's character as a pattern, but that he must have contemplated it as a motive. The mode of statement implies that such views were thoroughly recognized in the Church.

In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians (i. 5) we find the Apostle again designating his teaching by the expression, "Our Gospel." In the immediate context he states that the Thessalonian Christians had become followers of him and of the Lord. What is here designated "Our Gospel" must therefore have contained such a portraiture of our Lord's character as to have rendered it capable of being made a subject for imitation. It must evidently therefore have been already developed in a number of well-known distinctive features. This epistle is probably the earliest writing in the New Testament. If so, it carries the date of the existence of a portraiture of Christ, which had obtained a distinct recognition in the Church, a few years earlier.

In the first Epistle to Timothy (vi. 13) we find the following remarkable passage, "I charge thee before God, who quickeneth all men, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession."

It has not been pretended that this epistle is a forgery subsequent to the date of the fourth Gospel. It is hardly possible to resist the evidence which this passage affords, that there must have been current in the Church at the time when it was written a version of the account of our Lord's appearance before Pilate, exactly similar to that which we now read in the Gospel by St. John. The Synoptic accounts could not justify such an adjuration as that here used, but if the account given us by St. John of our Lord's interview with Pilate was generally known, the reference is intelligible. The account in the fourth Gospel, therefore, cannot be a late fiction.

In the second Epistle we meet with the following forms of expression: "Keep the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." "That good deposit which was committed unto thee, keep." "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my Gospel." All these expressions imply the existence of a full portraiture of the life of Christ, either written or oral.

But no writing of the New Testament contains such distinct allusions to a dramatised portraiture of the life of Christ, as the Epistle to the Hebrews. It must have been current in the Church in substantially the same form as we read it in the Gospels.

We shall not discuss the question as to whether St. Paul was the author of this epistle. It will be enough to assume that it is a production of the Apostolic age. It is important to observe that it was intended for the use of Jewish Christians, and that it is a treatise on the various aspects which are presented by the person of the Messiah. Although it is addressed to Jews, its author evidently presupposes the existence of a developed portraiture of the person and character of the Messiah, respecting which both his readers and himself were substantially agreed. Unless

this had been the case the whole of his arguments must have fallen powerless to the ground.

The treatise is a regular one. It first discusses the divine aspect of the person of the Messiah, and afterwards the human one. Although he is not designated by the expression "the Logos," his portraiture substantially agrees with that contained in the fourth Gospel, and also closely coincides with Pauline views.

In treating of the divine aspect of his character, the author describes the Christian revelation as made in his person. Such a declaration would have been simply absurd unless a fully developed portraiture of the person and character of Jesus was recognized both by himself and those to whom he wrote. (Heb. i. 1.)

Having discussed the divine aspect of his character, he then proceeds to unfold the human. He most carefully ascribes to him a real and not a fictitious humanity. "The man Jesus was made perfect through sufferings." "He is not ashamed to call men his brethren." "He was in every respect made like unto them." "He was tempted like as they are." His divine and human character presented an aspect in which mercy and faithfulness were combined. "He has learned obedience." (Heb. ii.) From having been exposed to temptation himself, he is perfectly able to sympathize with those who are in similar circumstances. Such a portraiture exactly corresponds with the more expanded one of the Gospels.

The author was of opinion that those to whom he wrote were in possession of such a definite view of the person and work of Jesus, that it would enable them to form a lively picture of him as the Apostle and High Priest of the Christian calling. (Heb. iii. 1.) He therefore exhorted them to contemplate him in this character. In this portraiture of him the attribute of faithfulness was conspicuous. (iii. 2.) He must have been exhibited with a character which represented him as capable of being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, being human in every respect except that it was devoid of sin.

In Heb. v. 7, the human aspect of his character is exhibited in terms which prove that the author of the epistle must have been acquainted with the story of the agony in the Garden, and that he believed that his readers

were so also. Still, however, he is no servile copier of the Synoptics. While he omits the details, he notices one fact not mentioned by them, that in the struggle our Lord was moved even to tears.

We next come to that portion of the epistle which treats of the Messiah in his Priestly character. In it (ix. 26) we have a distinct reference to the human aspect of our Lord's person, exactly as it is depicted by the Evangelists. He is described as having been holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Attention is likewise drawn to the voluntary character of his death.

The writer then proceeds to describe the Messiah as the great High Priest of the Christian calling, possessed of every perfect attribute of human nature, and enthroned in the highest place of majesty in the heavens. His Priesthood is described as complete, both in respect to his sacrifice, his holiness, the perfection of his obedience, and the union of a divine and human nature in his person. (viii. 9, 10.) It is evident that all these views which we have been considering imply the existence of a well known portraiture of our Lord, which was generally recognized by the Christian Church. Of this portraiture that which is presented to us in the Epistle is the abridgment.

Of all the writings in the New Testament that which bears the clearest indications of having been composed under Jewish influences is the Epistle by St. James. It is remarkable that the references in it, to even the human aspect of our Lord's character are few. Still it does not contain the smallest indication that its author had before him a portraiture different from the one which we have been considering. Although the immediate references are few, the general aspect of its morality bears a striking affinity to that contained in St. Matthew's Gospel.

The first Epistle of Peter contains a succession of allusions to the various circumstances in which the Gospels have depicted Simon Peter, and to the character which they have ascribed to him, of so delicate a nature that they are beyond the reach of any power of imitation which could have been possessed by either forger or mythologist. They prove beyond contradiction that the



Peter of the Epistle is the Peter of the Gospels, and that the latter is an historical and not a mythical character. We have drawn attention to them elsewhere.\*

So strong is the affinity between the first Epistle of John and the fourth Gospel, that it will be superfluous to draw attention to it. It distinctly recognizes the existence of the human manifestation of the Word of life, and declares that it had formed the great subject of apostolic preaching.

Although the Epistles contain comparatively few direct allusions to the facts of the Gospels, yet the preceding survey of them affords the most unquestionable evidence of the existence of a multitude of indirect ones, and that there must have been in existence a well known portraiture of Christ, in which he was depicted in all the great outlines in which he stands before us in the Evangelists. The incidental manner in which they are referred to by the writers of the Epistles proves that they must have been widely diffused in the Church, and have been generally accepted by it as the foundation of its belief. Of this the mode of reference to them affords even stronger evidence than if the statements respecting them were direct. The authors could not have written as they have unless they had been well assured that the belief in them was a matter of general acquiescence.

The undisputed Epistles of Paul, therefore, afford us the most distinct proof that this great portraiture of our Lord was in existence within a period less than twenty-five years after the resurrection.

The testimony of the other Epistles also is decisive that it was developed prior to the period which the mythic theory postulates for the composition of our Gospels.

This portraiture recognizes all the great features of that in the Synoptics, and considerable portions of it correspond substantially with that presented to us in the fourth Gospel.

If the mythic theory is correct in assigning the date of this Gospel to somewhere between the years A.D. 150 and 170, the main features of the peculiar type of thought

\* "Nature and Extent of Divine Inspiration," p. 359.

which it contains must have been developed more than eighty years earlier. If, therefore, the difference between the aspect of the Christ as denoted by the Pauline Epistles and that exhibited in the fourth Gospel be taken as denoting the law of the rate of such developments, it affords convincing proof that such conceptions are very slowly elaborated.

We have already proved with respect to the mythic theory generally that it utterly fails as a solution of the origin of the Gospels, and of the portraiture of the Christ which they contain. We then assumed the utmost limits of time which the maintainers of the unhistorical character of the Gospels postulate for their production, viz., a period of from sixty to eighty years for that in the Synoptics, and one hundred and twenty to a hundred and forty for that in St. John's Gospel, and showed that that interval of time was quite insufficient for its development according to the laws of the mental constitution of man, in conformity with the assumed conditions of the case. We further took for granted that a period of fifty years separates the composition of the Synoptics from that of the fourth Gospel; and assuming that this showed the time requisite for such developments to obtain completeness, we proved that it was utterly impossible that the gulph which separates the popular conception of the Messiah at the time of the crucifixion from the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists could have been bridged over in a period of sixty years; the interval which separates the Synoptics from St. John being as nothing, compared with that which separates the Jewish from the Synoptical Messiah.

We have now however advanced a further stage in our proof, and shown that even if the above dates could be proved to be the real ones for the composition of our Gospels, there was a portraiture of Jesus in existence similar in all its great features to that of the Synoptics within twenty-five years of the crucifixion. During that interval, therefore, it must have been elaborated, if the Gospels are unhistorical. But the manner in which it is alluded to in the Epistles proves that it must have been in existence several years before they were written. The

narrow interval of twenty-five years must therefore undergo a still further diminution.

We have also shown that there are facts connected with the Epistles which carry up its existence until within a few years of the resurrection.

We need say no more. The absurdity is too great for serious discussion. We will assume that the portraiture attained its full development within a few years prior to the date of the Epistles of St. Paul. The mythic theory asks us to believe that within that interval of time a purely human Jesus, a Messiah framed on the Jewish model, grew, after he had been crucified, into the full proportions of the Jesus of the Evangelists.

But if every conceivable modification of the mythic theory fails to account for the creation of such a portraiture as that of the Christ of the Gospels, it follows that he cannot be an ideal creation but an historical reality. The assumption that he was such accounts for all the phenomena of the case. The Gospels then become simple portraitures, depicted by men of various mental characters, of a divine Christ who actually trod the stage of human life.

We are also entitled to draw one more conclusion. If the Christ be historical and not mythical, it follows that the Church must have a Messiah, notwithstanding any amount of difficulties with which the Gospels may be supposed to be surrounded, or any errors respecting the bare facts of history into which their authors may have fallen. The portraiture exists in the Gospels. The errors and mistakes which the authors of the Gospels are alleged to have committed do not affect the fact of its existence, or the historical reality of the person of our Lord.

The following points therefore may be considered to have been clearly established:—

1. The mythic theory, even with the advantage of unbounded time at its command, would fail to account for the portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels.

2. Its failure becomes the more evident, when we consider the time required for the evolution of the conception.

3. This is rendered still more evident under the historical

conditions of the case, which prove that all the main features of the portraiture were in existence within less than twenty-five years after the crucifixion.

4. The only solution of the existence of the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists is that in all its main features it is a copy of an historical reality.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE MYTHICAL GOSPELS.

It is hardly possible to arise from a comparison of the mythical Gospels with those of the four Evangelists without arriving at the conclusion that the one are the wildest fictions, and the other deeply marked with the indications of historical reality.

In relation to our argument this comparison is of considerable importance. We are here brought into the direct presence of mythic Christianity. We are thus enabled to determine for ourselves what kind of productions the mythic spirit, when it has displayed its genius in delineations of our Lord's person, has actually produced. In instituting a comparison between them we leave the regions of theory and enter those of fact. We are fairly entitled to ask our opponents to give the reason why, if the mythic spirit, when exerted on Christian subjects, has produced Gospels such as these in the second and subsequent centuries, it has elaborated Gospels of an entirely different type in the first?

We need hardly observe that the mythical Gospels are in every point and feature strongly contrasted with the four Evangelists. The four relate the events of our Lord's ministry: two only give us an account of his birth, and one preserves the single anecdote of his boyhood. The mythical Gospels are almost entirely confined to detailing anecdotes in connection with our Lord's infancy and boyhood, to accounts of his passion and resurrection, and to a description of his visit to the Underworld. They

abound with miraculous incidents; but they are all, with scarcely an exception, of a most grotesque and monstrous character. Their marvels are devoid of a moral aspect; and in not a few of them the child Jesus is represented as a highly mischievous boy. While a divine power is assigned to him, it is wielded with the caprice of a child; and he is entirely destitute of any appearance of an elevated moral environment. Instead of the lofty wisdom of our Evangelists, he is made to utter trifles or even worse. He is constantly exhibited in the attitude of self-glorification, without an atom of humility; and to his schoolmasters his conduct is particularly offensive. The additions which some of them make to the account of the trial before Pilate are very considerable, and are evidently introduced with a view of imparting to the whole a more judicial aspect, although Pilate is made to act ridiculously enough. The account of the resurrection is exceedingly full, and forms a most striking contrast to that which we read in the Evangelists. But perhaps no portion of them is more characteristic than the account of the visit to the Underworld. Such a subject is one exactly suited for the exercise of the genius of mythology, but little fitted for that of the genuine historian. Accordingly, while our four Gospels are entirely silent on the subject, the Gospel of Christ's visit to the Underworld may be best described as mythology run riot.

We designate these Gospels by the term mythical, rather than apocryphal or spurious. They present evidences enough of justly meriting these latter titles, but the term "mythical" more exactly designates the nature of their contents.

They consist of the following pieces:\* The Gospel of James, commonly called the Protevangelium; the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, or of the Infancy of Mary and of

\* The English reader is now placed in a position to form a judgment for himself as to the character of these Gospels by Mr. B. H. Cowper's translation of the entire series, which is a valuable addition to English theology. Every person who wishes to satisfy himself of the general historical character of our four Gospels will do well to read this volume. The following references, which are derived from it, will give an idea of their general character; but whoever wishes to form a correct estimate of the gulph which separates the mythic from the genuine Gospels should peruse the entire series.



Jesus; the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary; the History of Joseph the Carpenter; the Gospel of Thomas; the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy; Letters to and from Jesus to Abgar; the Prayer of Jesus Son of Mary; the Letter of Lentulus; the Story of Veronica; the Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of Pilate; the Descent of Christ to the Underworld; Letters and Reports of Pilate to Tiberius; Letters between Herod and Pilate; the Trial and Condemnation of Pilate; the Death of Pilate; the Story of Joseph of Arimathea; the Revenging of the Saviour.

It is impossible to determine the dates of these productions, and of others which have perished. They are all of more recent date than any of the canonical books. The series commenced in the second century at latest, and continued for several subsequent ones. The attempts made in these Gospels to throw a divine halo round the person of the Virgin Mary are worthy of particular notice. Her birth and many circumstances of her life are invested with a supernatural character.

As it is highly important that a correct estimate should be formed of the character of these Gospels, we shall adduce instances of the peculiarities of several of them, especially in their miraculous portions.

The Gospel of James might be correctly designated as a history of the birth and life of Mary, continued till the Murder of the Innocents. One marvellous incident it will be sufficient to refer to, for the purpose of giving an idea of its character. Elizabeth with John escapes from the proscription; she groans and says with a loud voice, Mount of God, receive a mother with her child; the mountain suddenly divides and receives her. Zecharias is murdered by Herod in the temple. The priests after waiting for him enter. The wainscotings of the temple shriek out, and are cleft from the top to the bottom.

The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew also contains a minute account of the parentage, birth, education, and marriage of Mary. It represents her as having been brought up in the temple under the care of the priests. Rods are laid up in the temple to determine who should be her husband. Joseph, who is an old man, is described as laying up his with reluctance. When he receives it back, immediately a dove, whiter than snow, issues from the top and flies up

to heaven. The author then gives us an account of the Annunciation nearly in the words of our Evangelists. Joseph is absent from home; and returning after nine months finds Mary pregnant. He is greatly alarmed, but is reassured by a dream. The priests, however, take up the matter warmly, and administer to Joseph and Mary the waters of Jealousy.

Both these Gospels give a similar account of the birth of Jesus; but that in Pseudo-Matthew is on an enlarged scale. They state that the nativity took place in a cave. Mary and the child leave the cave and enter a stable, where an ox and an ass adore the infant. A minute account of the escape of the holy family into Egypt, and of the events which befel them on their journey follows. The whole family enter a cave where there are many dragons. The child descends from his mother's lap, and the dragons worship him. He receives similar homage from a number of lions and leopards, who go before them for the purpose of showing them the way, bowing their heads, and showing their subjection by wagging their tails; and they adore him with great reverence. The infant Jesus causes a lofty palm-tree laden with fruit to bow down so that his mother may gather it, and a spring of water to burst forth at its foot. By his orders an angel plants one of its branches in the Paradise of his Father. We suppose that this is meant to reward the obedience of the tree. He then carries them over the distance of a thirty days' journey in a single day.

On their arrival in Egypt they enter a temple, where there were three hundred and fifty-five idols. These all fall prostrate before him on his entrance.

We now come to some of the mischievous miracles which these Gospels do not hesitate to ascribe to Jesus. Let it be observed, that their contents afford decisive evidence that their authors had seen the authentic ones.

On their return to Galilee, on a Sabbath day, Jesus, who is now arrived at the fourth year of his age, is playing with some other children. He makes seven pools of mud, and to each a set of channels to convey water into them, and back again. Another child overthrows his work. He denounces a woe on him, and he dies immediately; but on the remonstrances of his mother, he spurns the body of

the dead child with his foot, and restores him to life again.

The following is a favourite anecdote in several of these Gospels. The child Jesus made seven clay sparrows on the Sabbath day. The Jews and Joseph remonstrate at this breach of the Sabbatical rest. Jesus orders the sparrows to fly, and they obey him. How unlike the actions of him who cured the sick on the Sabbath, and taught that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath!

After performing this senseless miracle, he is represented as destroying another boy, for the offence of breaking his pools of mud. Joseph thereupon takes Jesus home. On their way another boy, meaning to insult him, stumbles against his shoulder. He tells him that he shall not return home whole, and there upon the boy falls down and dies. The child's parents tell Joseph that he ought to teach Jesus to bless, and not to curse. Joseph again remonstrates. Jesus takes the dead child by the ear, and holds him up from the ground in the sight of all, and restores him to life.

We leave it to those who consider it possible to conceive and dramatise the character of the Jesus of the Evangelists by a set of mythical creations, to determine how long it would take to develope out of this revengeful child the conception of him who, when he was reviled, reviled not again.

The author has next supplied us with several anecdotes of the vain attempts to get Jesus to learn his letters; and of the mode in which he astonishes his teachers by his marvellous wisdom. Kindred stories are found in several of these Gospels. The latter incidents are ridiculous enough, and throughout he is represented as a child who was a stranger to docility. The miracles of these Gospels, which are very numerous, are devoid of all moral import. At the age of six years, he is sent to fetch a pitcher of water. Another child thrusts himself against it and breaks it. Jesus brings the water home in his cloak. After this he enters a lion's den, and receives worship from a lion, a lioness, and their cubs. These are genuine monkish miracles.

Two or three of these Gospels contain the following

anecdote with a little diversity of form. Joseph has to make a couch six cubits long; or, as the story of Joseph the Carpenter has it, a throne for Herod. Owing to some bungling between Joseph and his boy, the planks are cut of the wrong dimensions. Joseph and Jesus pull at them and stretch them to their right measure. This incident must have been widely diffused in mythic circles, and is exactly of the type which mythologists would have invented.

Such is a sample of the portraiture of the boyhood of Jesus as we find it depicted in this Gospel. It will be superfluous to point out that between it and our Evangelists there is not a single point in common.

We shall pass over the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, as not relating to our present subject. It is of precisely the same character as those which we have just considered.

The history of Joseph the Carpenter is a very strange document. It purports to be a discourse which our Lord addressed to his Apostles, in which he gives a minute account of the life of his reputed father. It describes the incarnation, the journey to Egypt, the death of Herod, and terminates with a very particular account of that of Joseph. A large number of the strangest utterances are put into our Lord's mouth in connection with this subject; and the doctrines and sentiments of the whole discourse are separated by the widest conceivable interval from those in the Evangelists. It is not too much to say that the state of mind which could have composed the one would have been utterly incapable of originating the other.

The Gospel of Thomas is exactly of a similar character to that of Pseudo-Matthew. It adds a considerable number of miracles, all of the same type. Among these the child Jesus is made to cure his brother James when almost dying from the bite of a viper. Two other children are described as having been raised from the dead by him. We have also many additional accounts of the attempts of different teachers to teach him, all characterised by pre-eminent absurdity and even profanity. One of them in a passion strikes Jesus on the head. He curses him, and he dies immediately.

But the Arabic Gospel exhibits the mythic spirit in the utmost wildness of absurdity. Demons issue from a

demoniac boy in the form of crows and serpents, on one of Jesus's wrappers being applied to him. A dumb bride is cured by the act of embracing the infant Jesus, and a leprous girl cleansed by using the water in which he had been washed. But it will be useless to adduce any more of such stories. One anecdote, however, is a singular piece of invention. During the journey to Egypt, the holy family fall in with several robbers, among whom were two whom the child prophesies will be crucified with him thirty years after, and that one of them will be admitted into Paradise. There is another still more curious. A woman had a son vexed by Satan, called Judas. He was in the habit of biting all who approached him, and, when alone, of biting himself. He makes an attempt to bite Jesus, but fails. He succeeds, however, in striking him on the right side. Satan is expelled; but the boy ultimately turns out to be Judas Iscariot; and the side which he struck was the one which the Jews pierced with the spear.

We now pass on to the Gospel of Nicodemus. The subject matter of this is the passion and the resurrection. It is very long and very minute, and introduces a great number of incidents of which our Gospels are entirely ignorant.

It is not too much to say of it, that it does not contain one single dignified incident, and that it utterly mars the divine portraiture of the suffering Jesus. The first portion of it is a description of the reiterated attempts of the Jews to obtain our Lord's condemnation, and of the efforts of Pilate to save him. The incidents, however, are devoid of the appearance of probability, and some of them directly contradict our Gospels; while, at the same time, it mentions most of those which are contained in them. One incident will mark the character of the composition. When our Lord is brought into Pilate's presence, the tops of the standards bow down and worship him. In inventing the forms of a regular judicial procedure the author has shown a singular ignorance of ordinary facts.

After this follows a long and intolerably wearisome account of the resurrection, of the sifting of its evidence on the part of the Jews, and of the imprisonment of Joseph of Arimathea, who is delivered from prison by means of the house in which he was confined being lifted up by the



four corners. The author is, however, far more prone to speech-making than to the invention of marvellous stories. Long and tiresome speeches are put into the mouths of Nicodemus, Joseph, Annas, Caiaphas, and others. He represents the whole Sanhedrim as at length assenting to the truth of the resurrection. Such inventions are precisely those which would have occurred to mythologists; but if the original followers of Jesus had based Christianity on them, it would never have been heard of in history.

One of the most singular and characteristic of these pieces is the narrative of the descent of Jesus into the Underworld. Such a subject was pre-eminently suitable to mythology, and it is here presented to us in a genuine mythic dress. It is worthy of our particular attention.

It professes to rest on the testimony of Simeon and his two sons, who were among those who had been raised from the dead at our Lord's resurrection. They are described as having returned home and as living at Arimathea. They are brought to Jerusalem and adjured by the God of Israel to tell the truth. The men who had been raised ask for paper and ink, make the sign of the cross, and write the account.

They describe themselves as having been in Hades with those who fell asleep from the beginning. At midnight a light as it were of the sun shines in these dark places. Immediately on its appearance, Abraham, the Patriarchs, and the Prophets, congratulate one another. Next follows a speech of John the Baptist; and Seth, at Adam's suggestion, addresses the assembly.

A dialogue then ensues between Satan and Hades. The former tells the latter that Jesus has been crucified, and that he must be ready to bind him. Hades expresses considerable doubt as to his power to do so; and tells Satan, that a few days before he had swallowed up a certain man, Lazarus by name, and that one, whom he strongly suspected to have been Jesus, drew him by force out of his bowels. He therefore conjures Satan not to bring Jesus thither; lest, instead of retaining him, they should lose all the dead they already hold.

During the dialogue a voice of thunder is heard, proclaiming, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come

in." Satan, on the advice of Hades, goes forth to resist him, and the latter enjoins the demons to bar all the gates closely.

On hearing this proclamation, all the departed are in commotion. Several saints begin to reproach Hades vehemently. A second proclamation is issued, and the iron gates are crushed. All the saints are loosed from their bonds, and the King of glory enters as a man, and all the dark places are lighted up.

The King of glory thereupon seizes Satan, and hands him to his angels to be bound. He then delivers him over to Hades to be kept as a prisoner till the time of his second coming. Hades bitterly reproaches him.

The Saviour then springs out of Hades, followed by Adam, the patriarchs, martyrs and prophets, and conducts them to Paradise, where they meet Enoch, Elijah, and the penitent thief, the latter of whom gives an account of his arrival there.

The above will be sufficient to give the reader an idea of the general aspect of these writings and of the tendencies of mythical thought when it is exerted on such subjects as those embraced in the Gospels. From their perusal we draw the following conclusions :

1st. That if they are the productions of the mythic spirit during the second and subsequent centuries, the same spirit could not have produced the genuine Gospels in the first.

2nd. Mythic miracles are invariably grotesque.

3rd. Their moral aspect will be a reflection of the character of their originators, and consequently a low one.

4th. The favourite subjects in connection with Christianity on which mythologists have exerted their powers, are precisely those on which the canonical Gospels are silent.

5th. Mythic literature is incapable of producing an elevated religion or morality.

6th. These myths do not present us with a remnant of that spirituality which is of the essence of our Gospels.

7th. That those portions of them which are not miraculous, abound in absurd stories, and historical contradictions.

We have great reason to be thankful for the preservation of these stories. They enable us to test the tendencies of Christian mythology, and to ascertain, not as a theory, but as a fact, that if it had gone on for ever elaborating

mythical creations, it would never have produced the Jesus of the Evangelists. On the contrary, although the mythologists had that portraiture before their eyes, all they succeeded in accomplishing was to degrade it.

The case stands thus. Our Gospels present us with the picture of a glorious Christ; the mythic Gospels, that of a contemptible one. Our Gospels have invested him with the highest conceivable form of human greatness; the mythic ones have not ascribed to him one lofty action. In our Gospels he exhibits a superhuman wisdom; in the mythic ones a nearly equal superhuman absurdity. In our Gospels he is arrayed in all the beauty of holiness; in the mythic ones this aspect is entirely wanting. In our Gospels not one stain of selfishness defiles his character; in the others, the boy Jesus is both pettish and malicious. Our Gospels exhibit to us a sublime morality; not a ray of it shines in those of the mythologists. The miracles of the one and of the other are contrasted in every point. A similar opposition of character runs through the whole current of their thought, feeling, morality, and religion.

We admit that many mythical stories were likely to get into circulation in the first century on subjects of such pre-eminent interest as those which are contained in the Gospels. It was hardly possible that it could be otherwise. The intensity of feeling which the first publication of the Gospel excited in the mind must have been extreme. The spirit of delusion is usually an attendant on such a state. Many of the points on which the Gospels furnish little or no information are of the deepest interest. They tell us next to nothing respecting the first thirty years of our Lord's life; on his descent to Hades they are silent. These and kindred subjects must have supplied a wide field for mythology. Nothing is more remarkable than the silence of our Gospels on these and many other subjects which are of the deepest interest to the human mind, and which occupy a prominent place in all ordinary biographies. It is impossible to account for this silence on the supposition that the narratives are mythical.\*

The preservation of the mythic Gospels supplies us with direct evidence as to the kind of stories which mythologists

\* See "Nature and Extent of Divine Inspiration," p. 285.

would have invented. The supporters of the mythic theory are bound to tell us what peculiar influence was in active exercise during the first century, which has impressed on the Evangelists the opposite character. The believer in the supernatural origin of the Gospels has a theory which is able to account for the existence of the phenomenon, viz., the presence of the Spirit of inspiration in the Church. Let the believers in the unhistorical character of the Gospels propound some rational account of the matter. They must appeal to a cause more definite than the mere power of spontaneous impulse.

If our Gospels were of a mythic origin, it would have been impossible to have impressed on them their present character. Myths are generated by the spirit of credulity, fanaticism, or enthusiasm, and at periods when the imagination is the predominant faculty in man. The mythical productions of such minds would bear the indelible impress of the source from which they came. But our Gospels are marked by the spirit of sobriety, impartiality, holiness, and spirituality. They are utterly unlike the works of enthusiasts or fanatics.

If the spirit of mythology was the predominant influence in the first century, what has become of its productions? They must have been very numerous. Those which were composed on the type of the narratives of the mythic Gospels must have greatly exceeded in number those of a contrary aspect. But they have perished. Still, if the whole Church was animated by the mythical spirit, how was it possible that its genuine creations should have become extinct, and those of an opposite character have been preserved? The latter must have run entirely counter to the current tone of thought. Is it possible to believe that the stories of our Gospels would have been relished by those whose moral and spiritual atmosphere was that of the mythical ones?

But it may be replied, that the persons who first reduced the narratives to a written form had a large number of fables of both classes before them; and that guided by their own good sense they collected together all those of a holy, moral, and elevated character, and passed over those of a contrary description. To this the answer is obvious: first, that our Gospels do not contain the smallest trace of

such a process; and secondly, that it would have been impossible to induce a society, impregnated with the love of fables of the character we have been considering, to adopt such stories as those contained in the Evangelists as the genuine exponents of its faith; and thirdly, that persons who could have produced such mythic extravagances must have been utterly incapable of inventing a single narrative such as are contained in the genuine Gospels.

But if mythic stories were generated in the first century, what caused their extinction? We answer, the oral teaching of Apostolic men, against which they could not hold their ground.

We readily acknowledge that many spurious Gospels existed at an early period. But these were not mythic Gospels, but accounts of the life of our Lord set forth with a view to the maintenance of definite doctrines. They were all founded on the same story as that contained in the Evangelists. The Gospel according to the Nazarenes was a varied form of Matthew. Our opponents wish us to believe that our present Matthew grew out of it. There is strong testimony that Marcion rejected the other Gospels on account of their doctrinal tendencies, and set forth one of his own, of which that of Luke constituted the basis.

It is evident, therefore, that such Gospels must have assumed as their foundation the groundwork of our present ones, the statements of which were slightly modified to suit the views of those who composed them. This is what is done by many modern religious parties. They do not set forth new Gospels in conformity with their own opinions, but they do what is practically the same thing; *i.e.*, they ignore a large portion of the contents of our present ones. Gospels of this kind were not the work of simple-minded mythologists, but of men who acted with a deliberate purpose.

The Gnostic Gospels are a remarkable illustration of the nature of these tendencies. These Sectaries did not venture to set forth a fresh body of legends, differing from the facts on which the established belief of the Christian Society was founded. When we consider how opposed those facts were to their own views, this would obviously have been the most natural mode of proceeding. But the facts of the



Gospel history were too deeply impressed on the mind of the Church to admit of the possibility of doing so with the slightest chance of success. Instead, therefore, of adopting the more obvious course, they asserted that different events in our Evangelical narrative took place only in appearance and not in reality. The case which has the nearest approach to the apparent creation of a new myth, is an incident in one of these Gospels which represents Judas as changed into the likeness of Jesus, and that he was crucified in his stead, while the real Jesus was taken up to heaven. But even the invention of incidents of this kind pre-supposes the existence of a well-established belief in our present Evangelical narrative, which the efforts of such mythologists were unable to subvert.

The existence of such Gospels, therefore, not only contradicts the idea of the mythic origin of our present ones, but affords a strong confirmation of their genuine historical character. Their authors admitted them as the groundwork on which they built. If the general state of feeling in the Church had been the mythical one which our opponents suppose, it would have been far easier to have set forth an entirely new life of Jesus, such as has been done in these modern times, than to have descended to the expedients to which the Gnostic Sects were compelled to have recourse, in order to effect a union between the acknowledged facts of the Gospels and their own philosophy. Many of the devices adopted by these sects for the purpose of effecting this, are certainly very coarse ones.

We know that large numbers of anecdotes respecting the actions and sayings of our Lord were in circulation in the primitive Church. This is implied by the preface to St. Luke, and directly asserted in the conclusion of St. John's Gospel. It would have been easy to compose a Gospel such as that of the Ebionites, by making a selection from the numerous incidents of our Lord's ministry, which presented the mere human aspects of his person, and by omitting those which depicted him in his divine character. But a Gospel of this kind by no means comes up to the exigencies of the mythic theory. Its supporters utterly deny that the historical Jesus had any thing divine about him. But a Christian after the Ebionite type would have conceived of Jesus at least as the greatest of the prophets.

He would have invested him with a high form of divine inspiration, and the power of working miracles, and would have ascribed to him the whole morality of the Gospels. In one word, an Ebionite Jesus, though stripped of the diviner aspect of his character, would have been far from a merely human one. It follows, therefore, that the Gospel according to the Ebionites, whatever it may have been, and we are completely ignorant of its contents, must have differed altogether in its conception from that of the Jesus which the conditions of the mythic theory pre-suppose as the only possible one. According to their views it must have been a Gospel equally mythic with our present ones.

The mythic theory, therefore, gains nothing from the supposed existence of the Ebionite Gospel, which was no doubt a collection of anecdotes presenting the more human and Jewish aspect of our Lord's person. If it be urged that the Evangelical portraiture may be a development of this, we adduce the whole of the previous reasonings as an answer to the assertion. That portraiture contains all the elements out of which such a Gospel might have been composed; but the portraiture could not grow out of them. Besides, as we have said, such a Christ is not the Christ which the mythic theory demands. It must have required a long succession of developments to have created him out of a Jesus who would have been the historic Jesus of our opponents. If conjecture is a legitimate instrument to be employed in the discussion of historical questions, we readily concede that by its aid we can construct any history we please. But we are dealing with facts. We have before us portraits of two different Christs, that of the Evangelists and that of the mythologists. They differ from each other in every thing but in name. If the one is mythological the other cannot be so. That of the Evangelists unquestionably existed in all its main features within twenty years after the ascension. We have the strongest evidence that it is the rock on which the original Christian Church was built. If it is not historical, let it be shown from whence it came, and by what means it has been elaborated. Until this can be done, the only possible solution is, that it has come down from heaven.

## CHAPTER XIX.

FEATURES IN THE GOSPELS, WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT WITH  
THE SUPPOSITION OF THEIR UNHISTORICAL CHARACTER.

WE have hitherto reasoned on the assumptions of the supporters of the mythic theory, and shown that they are subversive of the laws of our mental constitution, and inconsistent with the historical conditions of the case. We shall now prove that the Gospels fulfil the conditions on which they are based, and of that class of history to which they belong.

It is most important to observe that neither of them professes to be a life of Christ. Of the various orders of historical composition, they rather belong to the class of memoirs, but even this is not an accurate description of them. Their direct purpose is to set forth our Lord's public ministry, to establish his claim to be the Messiah, and to exhibit the nature of his Messianic kingdom. They are memoirs only as far as is consistent with this intention.

With the author of a biography one of the most important points is to set forth a true account of the events of a life in the order of time in which they occurred, and to present us with a full detail of them. This occupies a very subordinate place in the purposes of the authors of the Gospels. With them everything else has been subordinated to the purpose of exhibiting Jesus as the Messiah.

In compositions of this kind we have no right to expect a close attention to the order of the time or place of events.

But as histories they possess another remarkable and distinctive feature, without attending to which it is impossible to form a true estimate of their character. Three of them bear the most indubitable indications of having been at least partially composed out of a body of materials which had been for several years transmitted in an oral form before they were committed to writing.\*

\* The character of the entire parallel narrative of the Evangelists, and of every portion of it, together with the evidence which it affords

Of this the careful examination of the parallel narratives affords unquestionable proof. Their peculiar verbal agreements and disagreements, their omissions and insertions, are consistent with no other possible assumption. A careful attention to this is of the utmost importance in estimating the historical character of the Gospels.

It follows, therefore, that the different parallel discourses, parables and narratives, must have had an original form, from which all the variations found in our Gospels are mere deviations which have been introduced in the course of transmission.

But these variations have another important bearing on our argument. They are so varied and complicated that it is evident that a considerable number of years must have elapsed before they could have been effected.

If, therefore, the Gospels consist of myths, it follows that they must have been in existence several years before the Gospels were published in their present form, long enough in fact to have occasioned the deviations. This furnishes us with unquestionable evidence that the full conception of the portraiture of the Evangelical Jesus must have received its complete form several years prior to the date assigned by the supporters of the mythic theory for the composition of the Gospels. It therefore narrows the time at their command for its elaboration.

The Synoptics contain three different versions of what was once a common oral narrative. Besides the common matter, each one presents us with additions peculiar to itself. They are not the work of three writers, each of whom composed a separate history from his own recollections. They present us with an account of our Lord's ministry in Galilee, and of his last journey to Jerusalem, largely set forth in the same words; but with variations of detail which imply that the writers had access to

to the historical character of the Gospels has been discussed by the author in six articles in the *Journal of Sacred Literature*, Volumes 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the fourth series (1865-7). He is compelled to refer to these as affording the real groundwork of the present argument. Their length is so great that it is impossible to give here even an abridged view of the reasoning. They contain a minute comparison of the entire parallel narrative and discourses, and point out the evidence which they afford as to the historical basis on which they rest.

different sources of information of various degrees of exactness.

In one Evangelist a statement is very general and vague. In another it is wrought up with great minuteness of detail and liveliness of colouring, having all the appearance of being the testimony of an eye-witness. If this is not the case, it is a very skilful imitation of it. Another omits the graphic touches, and his narrative is just such as it would have been if it had been derived from a general source of information.

Such peculiar traits are precisely those which distinguish historical from mythical compositions.

One of the Synoptics bears the name of an Apostle. The larger proportion of its narratives bears few traces of those touches by which the presence of an eye-witness is usually indicated. They are even less in number than those in Luke, who merely claims the character of a diligent compiler. But with respect to the discourses the case is exactly the reverse. Judging from internal testimony we should form the opinion that although its contents may be a representation of the general preaching of Matthew, yet the greater portion of its narratives bear few indications of having been composed by an eye-witness of the scenes which he narrates. Of the three Synoptics, the Gospel of St. Mark bears the strongest indications of having been composed with the aid of autoptic testimony, that of St. Luke the next, and that of St. Matthew the fewest.

The Gospel of St. John stands on an entirely different basis. The nature of its contents leaves us no option but the assumption that it is the composition either of an eye-witness or of a deliberate impostor. It is in every point clear, definite, and distinct, just as an author ought to be who is narrating the events which he has witnessed. There is nothing general or indeterminate in any of his narratives. It abounds with a number of minute touches. If it is a forgery, it is a work of the greatest art.

Luke avows that he was a compiler of the accounts of others. Of such compilation every portion of his Gospel bears testimony. It is evident that it has been put together on a plan. Its contents show that its author had various sources of information. The marks of autoptic testimony



in it are scattered with a very unequal hand over its different parts. Sometimes he is very full and graphic; at others the reverse.

St. Mark tells us nothing of himself or of his sources of information. Still the Gospel presents traces of a most definite individuality. While he narrates the smallest number of events, his descriptions possess a peculiar vividness of character, such as distinguishes those of eye-witnesses. A strong testimony exists that Mark was closely connected with the Apostle Peter.

If the Gospels are historical, they ought to fulfil the historical conditions on which they are based; if they are a congeries of myths, it is certain that they must frequently offend against those on which they profess to be founded. In estimating their historical character, it is a very important consideration whether these conditions are realized or violated.

One thing must strike every reader. Although the four Gospels are evidently independent compositions, their various statements dovetail into one another, and frequently throw great light on their mutual obscurities. A narrative or discourse in one enables us to understand rightly what we were in danger of misunderstanding in another. Sometimes this is effected even by a few words. This is a peculiar quality of parallel reports of historical events. We never find it in mythic stories. No threefold version of them ever became the means of throwing light on their mutual obscurities.

If Mark had a close connection with Peter, all historical conditions require that we should find the influence of Peter's mind distinctly visible in the composition of this Gospel. We know that St. Luke was closely connected with Paul. His Gospel shows distinct indications of the presence of that Apostle. If none such were to be found, it would imperil its credibility as a history. But not only is the whole tone of Luke Pauline, but his account of the institution of the Sacrament is unquestionably derived from that Apostle.

St. Mark presents us with even stronger indications of the presence of St. Peter. Wherever this Gospel contains those peculiar traits which indicate the presence of an eye-witness, we can always discover from the testimony of the

other Evangelists that Peter was a witness of the scene which Mark so vividly describes.

Not only is this the case, but the delineations are exactly such as we should expect from a man of Peter's temperament. By the aid of the Gospels and his first Epistle it is easy to form a distinct conception of it. Next to our Lord and St. Paul, there is no one mentioned in the New Testament whom we can picture so clearly as this Apostle. We should expect his descriptions to be intensely graphic, and his eye ever on the watch to catch the various expressions of his Master's person. Mark's descriptions exactly correspond with this.

There are seven narratives in Mark which present us with all the traits by which the testimony of an eye-witness is distinguished: the expulsion of the legion, the cure of the demoniac boy, that of the paralytic, the stilling of the two storms, the feeding of the five thousand, and the whole of the events in connection with the cure of the issue of blood and the raising of Jairus' daughter. These are all described with the finest touches of graphic word-painting. On every one of these occasions the history makes it evident that Simon Peter was present. We apprehend that in every other place where Mark has a graphic delineation (the number of which is considerable), the presence of Peter can be positively proved or inferred on the strongest grounds of probability. This fact gives to the narratives in Mark the highest historical value, and is inconsistent with the supposition of their mythic origin.

The narratives of the passion and the resurrection, which are reported by all four Evangelists, supply us with certain data by which we can test their historical credibility. If the variations are historical, they ought to fulfil those conditions; if mythical, to violate them.

We are compelled to select these, as the minute examination of a considerable number would make too large a demand on our space.

It is important to observe with respect to the greater portion of this narrative, that even if Matthew's Gospel be the work of that Apostle, the account of all three Synoptics must rest on the reports of others. Two only of the Apostles were witnesses of the events which occurred after our Lord's arrest, and one of the crucifixion.

What then is the nature of the attestation on which this narrative is founded?

Of the events of the Paschal supper and of the arrest of our Lord all the Apostles were witnesses. Two only were present at the trial; and one at the crucifixion. The last event was also witnessed by several women who accompanied our Lord. Whatever is contained in the Gospels which cannot have been derived from these sources must have been compiled from general report.

The question, therefore, is of the highest importance in reference to their historical character, whether their phenomena are in accordance with the conditions of the case.

If the Gospels are histories, these conditions ought to be realized in their structure. They are so.

St. John was present through nearly the whole scene. His narrative, as far as it goes, ought to be clear, distinct, and definite. Such is the case.

All the Apostles were present up to the time of our Lord's arrest. All three Synoptic narratives are here very full, and each has touches peculiar to himself, which have the appearance of having been derived from ocular testimony.

Two of the Apostles only were present in the Palace. Matthew and Mark present us with one distinct scene, and John with another. In this portion of the narrative Luke is vague; but he narrates incidents which, when closely examined, substantiate the other accounts.

Of the remainder of the passion only one Apostle was a witness. That Apostle has given us a most distinct account of five different scenes in it.

Whatever was not known from him must have been learned by the other Evangelists either from the women, as far as their testimony was available, or from that of persons who were present and were afterwards converted, or from general report. The Synoptical account bears every indication of compilation, and is most difficult to weave into the form of a harmonious narrative. We must examine this in detail.

We first observe the account of the mode in which the Paschal Supper was prepared. Our Evangelists contain two accounts, with characteristic varieties. Matthew has one, and Mark and Luke the other.

The preparation was intended to be kept secret by our Lord, for the purpose of preventing Judas from knowing the time and place of the celebration. There was therefore an outer and an inner circle among the Apostles. The fact that it was to be got ready was known generally among them. The secret of time and place was confided to Peter and John only.

Matthew gives us the account, as it could have been known to the outer circle : Mark and Luke as it must have been known to Peter and John, who were the messengers, and who actually prepared it. The account in Matthew is indefinite throughout ; that in Mark and Luke is full and minute.

If these two accounts had been found united in either of the Evangelists, it might have been said that they were forgeries to suit the historical conditions of the case. But as it now stands, the form of the story affords the strongest evidence that it rests on an historical basis.

John has given us no account of the supper itself. He depicts two events which occurred at it with the utmost minuteness ; the washing of the disciples' feet, and the announcement of the betrayal.

The former is entirely passed over by the Synoptics. But while Luke's narrative is here very indistinct, he reports an incident which is a striking confirmation of the truth of John's account. He informs us, that some time during the feast an unseemly contest arose among the Apostles as to who should be the greatest in their Master's kingdom. Luke's account, therefore, which is evidently derived from a very indistinct, and even imperfect source of information, exactly dovetails into that of John. Such coincidences are founded not on fictions, but on facts.

Matthew's and Mark's account of the announcement of the betrayal is a picture to the life ; so is that of John. All three bear the strongest indications of autoptic testimony. Their variations are exactly such as we might expect from witnesses who occupied different positions at the table. One Evangelist has preserved one report, and one another. That of Luke, however, is brief and indistinct, and bears the marks of compilation.

Matthew and Mark place our Lord's warning to Peter of his impending denial, as given on the road to Gethsemane ;

Luke and John assert that it was uttered before they left the guest-chamber. Here we have a discrepancy; but one of the exact character which we should expect in an account of the events of that exciting night. The two former, however, afford us the means of correcting their own error. They tell us that Peter replied to our Lord, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee," and that all the other Apostles joined him in the asseveration.

Now it is hardly possible that the Apostles, eleven in number, could have heard the warning, and Peter's reply, if they were walking through the streets of Jerusalem during the season of the Passover. The circumstances of the case prevented the use of loud tones of voice. Still less could they all have joined in the asseveration. But all was quite possible to have occurred before leaving the guest-chamber, and the two opposing narratives mutually confirm one another.

The state of things presented by the Evangelists is therefore exactly in conformity with the historical conditions of the case. Under such circumstances, the facts deeply impress themselves on the memory; time and place are little attended to. Such variations of testimony, when a harmony underlies them, prove historical reality more than the minutest verbal agreement.

We have two very distinct accounts of the Agony in the Garden; one by Matthew and Mark, and the other by Luke. Their whole structure makes it evident that the one in Luke must have been derived from an independent source of information different from those in Matthew and Mark, which are substantially the same.

Now of this event the whole of the Apostles were not witnesses, but three only. Of these three James died early. We have no account of it from the pen of John. The small number of the witnesses, therefore, is in conformity with the distinctness of the two accounts. The form of them differs widely from that of the preceding and following scenes, which the whole of the Apostles witnessed.

The next event is the actual arrest. This is told in exact conformity with the historical conditions of the case. We learn from John only that our Lord advanced to meet his foes a little beyond the place where he and the Apostles



were previously standing. This would lead to the scattering of the witnesses of the scene. Some must have been further in advance than others. The Synoptics do not notice this, but their narratives presuppose it.

All the accounts are full, and each Evangelist notices some fact not mentioned by the others. This is exactly as it should be, if the accounts are derived from different witnesses, occupying different positions. One would notice, if sufficiently near, the scene described by John. Can it be doubted that that Evangelist would be among those in closest proximity to our Lord's person? Another would see Judas advancing before the band; another would observe him go up to our Lord and kiss him. John tells us that there were soldiers present. The Synoptics make no such statement; but Mark has one which plainly implies the fact which John asserts. In speaking of the kiss, he uses a military term, calling it *σύσσημον*, thereby evidently implying that soldiers were present. The Synoptics again confirm John's statement, that our Lord advanced to meet his foes: for while they leave the fact entirely unnoticed, they represent him as addressing the Apostles on sight of the band, "Arise, let us be going." Phenomena of this kind do more to prove fact than the most perfect agreement.

But the mode in which the minuter details dovetail into each other is only consistent with the supposition that they rest on an historical basis. Matthew and Mark represent Judas as at once going up to our Lord and kissing him. If John's account be historical, it is impossible that he could have done so. But Luke supplies us with the intermediate link; "he approached Jesus," says he, for "the purpose of kissing him."\* Matthew and Mark again represent the arrest as taking place immediately after the kiss of Judas. This is inconsistent with the narrative of John. Here again Luke supplies us with the connecting links. His statements about the cure of Malchus imply that our Lord's hands had not yet been bound. Matthew and Mark are express that he had been

† Ἐτι δὲ αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἰδοὺ ὄχλος καὶ ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰούδας, εἰς τῶν δώδεκα, προήρχετο αὐτῶν καὶ ἤγγισε τῷ Ἰησοῦ φιλεῖν αὐτόν. (xxii. 47.) The idea implied is that some short interval of time elapsed before the completion of the act.

already seized. John makes the binding the concluding act of the drama. He was first held by the hand, and finally bound.

Such variations would be certain to occur where the witnesses were many, and all in a state of the deepest excitement. They present far stronger indications of reality than if the whole had been woven into a well tessellated story.

One little circumstance, which is noted by all the Evangelists, is a strong evidence that the historical reality of the narrative has not been filtered away by a number of mythical embellishments. The person whose ear Peter cut off is designated in each Evangelist by the expression τὸν δούλον τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, *the* Servant, not *a* Servant, of the High Priest. The term can only mean that the person so designated held some distinct official position, whatever it may have been, of a well-known attendant, called "the Servant of the High Priest." The preservation of such a trait by all four Evangelists proves a distinctly historical incident. Fiction could not have invented it.

We are now arrived at that portion of the narrative, the events of which could have been witnessed by two only of the Apostles. With the exception of these our Lord was surrounded by none but enemies. Are the phenomena in agreement with the nature of the testimony on which the narrative must rest?

We have two accounts of the proceedings in the palace, each marked by most definite features, one by Matthew and Mark, describing a trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim; the other by John, narrating a private examination before Annas. Luke's account of the proceedings of this night is singularly indistinct. It is evidently not founded on direct ocular testimony. At the conclusion of it he gives an account of a second appearance of our Lord before the council, which is only alluded to by the other Evangelists.

The account in Matthew and Mark is entirely distinct from that of John. They differ in every particular; but both present us with the clear indications of having been founded on autoptic testimony.

John's narrative entirely agrees with the supposition that he was an eye-witness. As the examination before

Annas was a private one, the circumstances of the Apostle will account for his having the opportunity of witnessing it. Although he has given no account of the public examination before Caiaphas, he shows that he was aware of its existence; and that he did not omit it from ignorance.

But the account of the trial before Caiaphas has equally clear indications of having been founded on autoptic testimony. There was another witness present, viz., Peter; and we know that he was so placed that he could see the proceedings. Tradition has closely connected him with the author of Mark's Gospel.

The accounts of the Paschal supper, of the arrest, and the crucifixion, differ widely from those of the scene before us. The former bear all the indications of having been derived from a multiplicity of testimony. Of the latter we have only two distinct accounts. Only two Apostles witnessed it.

But the state of St. Luke's narrative demands particular attention. It is evidently a general one; and if we had nothing to correct its statements by, it would mislead us as to the facts. But imperfect as it is, it contains the reports of a few incidents which confirm the statements of the others.

While Luke describes our Lord as having been taken to the High Priest's palace, he says not one word as to an examination before Annas or Caiaphas having taken place that night. If we had his single account, we should draw the conclusion that our Lord was kept a prisoner until the following morning, when he was led before the council and condemned. The only events which he notices as having occurred in the meantime are Peter's threefold denial, and our Lord's mocking by the attendants.

But the narrative not only affords ample room for the events mentioned by the others; but it is only rendered possible on the supposition that they actually occurred. It distinctly asserts that our Lord witnessed the last denial of Peter, and nothing is more improbable than that he would have been held in custody in a room where Peter could have access to him. The mocking also, which St. Luke describes, implies his previous condemnation.

From the Synoptical account it seems inevitable that

Peter did not witness what took place before Annas. He is described as having taken his place at the fire from an early time of his entry, and as having his attention occupied with the servants. If the narrative in Matthew and Mark was derived from Peter, this circumstance shows us the reason of the omission.

We must now notice the account of Peter's denials—as we read them in the Synoptics they are very indistinct. Taking the four accounts together, they imply that not less than six attacks were made on Peter. John's is the first, and Mark's the next, in point of clearness.

The historical conditions must be noticed.

Although St. John introduces Peter, his narrative implies that he did not keep company with him in the hall. This is more distinctly implied by the accounts of the Synoptics. But his account of the first and third denials implies that he was within sight of Peter, though perhaps not within hearing. The first and third attacks as described by John are definite as to the persons by whom they were made. The second is very general, and implies that it was made by several persons. If the Synoptic account is accurate, we find, on a comparison of the Evangelists, that no less than three persons must have been concerned in making it.

According to Matthew and Mark, more than one person must have been concerned in the third attack. This may have been so; for it would be natural that John's attention would be directed to so important a personage as Malchus' kinsman, and the danger which Peter incurred in consequence, as he knew who the different persons in attendance were, of which Peter was probably ignorant. The account of St. John agrees, therefore, with his own historical position.

But the Synoptics vary very considerably from St. John's account. What, then, is their historical basis? It is evident that they must rest either on the account of Peter, or of some of the bystanders who were afterwards converted. If it rests on the latter, it will account for the confusion in the accounts. But Peter himself must have given some account of the transaction. How far have we a right to expect that it would be a definite one?

Respecting the first attack, all four Evangelists are agreed that it was made by the portress. The third was

made either at or after the termination of the scene before Caiaphas. Luke dates the second about an hour before the third. If this is correct it must have taken place during the trial. But John interposes the examination before Annas between the first and the second, and it is probably confused by Luke with the third.

It is evident that when the two last attacks were made on him, the mind of Peter was aroused to the highest state of excitement, and sense of personal danger. In such circumstances, if many persons joined in the attack, nothing would have been more likely than that he would confuse one with another. Peter was unquestionably in this state of mind; and the varied form of the accounts in the Synoptics may fairly be traced to this source. So far they are in accordance with the historical conditions which the Gospels pre-suppose. Matthew and Mark agree in their account of the third denial in assigning to Peter the use of imprecatory language. John does not; but the circumstances were likely to have called it forth. The knowledge of it must have come from Peter himself.

For the remainder of the Passion we are reduced to the testimony of a single eye-witness among the Apostles. If St. John's Gospel is not a forgery, we have his account of it. It consists of five distinct scenes, but it is evidently not intended as a complete history of it.

We cannot trace the presence of the women in the scenes which took place before Pilate, though this is strongly asserted in the mythical Gospels.\* Whenever the Synoptics differ from St. John, their accounts must be based on general sources of information. What, then, is the general character of their narratives?

They have all the appearances of compilation. It is highly difficult, if not impossible, to arrange their events in historical sequence. They are exactly such as would result from the collection of reports of different witnesses, some of whom had had their attention impressed with one thing, and some with another. John's account bears the indications of autoptic testimony, and, as far as it goes, is a complete whole, which cannot be said of the Synoptics.

\* The mythical Gospels represent the women as giving evidence before Pilate in our Lord's favour.



St. John's first scene is passed over by the Synoptics without mention. It is the account of a private examination before Pilate, consisting of very minute particulars. The Jews were hindered by their scruples from entering the Prætorium where it took place; these scruples were inapplicable in the case of the Apostle. Nothing hindered his witnessing the scene.

But although the Synoptics make no mention of it, their account is almost incredible, unless we assume the truth of that of John. Their narrative represents Pilate as at once pronouncing our Lord not guilty, on receiving his confession that he was King of the Jews. Had the heathen judge received no previous explanation of the sense in which the title was assumed, his conduct is utterly inexplicable. St. John's incident makes it intelligible enough. Such coincidences in accounts which have been evidently derived from independent sources of information, are the results of fact and not of fiction.

The variations in the outcries attributed in the Synoptics to the multitude are exactly in conformity with the historical position of their authors.

A similar observation is applicable to the discrepancy which exists between them and St. John, as to the time of the scourging. As scourging was well known to be the immediate preliminary of crucifixion, the common account assumes that it had been so in this case. It has been attempted to reconcile the two accounts by supposing that it was inflicted twice; but of this neither affords the slightest trace.

Luke's narrative, which bears very strong marks of compilation, has omitted the scourging altogether. But his more distant account contains a most intelligible echo of St. John's fact. He makes Pilate propose to the people to chastise our Lord and release him. In St. John the scourging is evidently inflicted for the purpose of mitigating their rage. These are clear indications of the presence of history.

Matthew and Mark tell us that the cross was carried by Simon; John that our Lord carried it himself. Here again the wholly independent account of Luke clears up the difficulty. He tells us that Simon carried one portion of it and our Lord the other, and renders it evident that our

Lord carried the whole before Simon was forced to assist him.

Luke furnishes us with another anecdote in direct connection with this event, viz., our Lord's discourse to the women who accompanied him on the way to execution.

How could this have been transmitted? Mark, who tells us nothing of the discourse, informs us that Simon's two sons were Christians, and that they survived when he wrote his Gospel. The whole aspect of this narrative is historical.

The insults offered to our Lord while he was on the cross are variously described. This is exactly as it should be, if these Gospels are compiled from various sources of information.

John notices an incident which is worthy of attention, in the closest agreement with the historical position of the Synoptics and himself. The Synoptics tell us generally that the soldiers cast lots for our Lord's garments. But St. John's account is most definite. He states that they divided the ordinary garments into four shares; but that, owing to the peculiar make of the tunic, they cast lots for it, whose it should be. How stand the historical conditions of this incident?

The precise nature of the event could only be known by one who was a very near spectator of the crucifixion. St. John tells us that he, the Virgin, and two other women, occupied at one time a place close to the cross. The casting of lots must have taken place after the crucifixion was completed. St. John's account implies that they had not long occupied the place where they stood, before our Lord addressed them. It is certain from the other Evangelists, that the other two women at a later period had withdrawn to a greater distance. It is evident, therefore, that they must have been standing there at the time when the soldiers were casting lots, and thus the Evangelist became a witness of the scene which he has so minutely described. But it is a minute point, which could not have attracted much attention, and could only have been known to few; and, therefore, the Synoptical account has stated it very generally.

But it may be said that this is an invention of the author

to make the Gospel pass off as historical. Now we learn from St. Luke, that about the same time our Lord uttered the prayer for his murderers. This prayer is so much in John's style of thought that we feel assured, if he had heard it, he would have noticed it in his Gospel. Now if we assume both accounts to be historical, do the facts as they stand before us in the Evangelists imply that St. John was within hearing when this prayer was uttered?

It is evident that he must have been so very shortly after. But as we have already observed, the words in which he has described our Lord as commending his mother to his care, imply that he had not long been so when they were spoken. The prayer in Luke was uttered during the act of crucifixion. During the execution, it is plain that there must have been some means of guarding the ground, to prevent interruption. We may be quite sure, therefore, that no person would be admitted to a situation so near to the cross, as that which St. John states that he occupied, until the act of crucifixion had been completed. If so, he could not have heard the words.

But as our Lord was surrounded by none but his enemies, how could it be known that he uttered the words at all? The soldiers were Romans, and heathens. Their intercourse with the Jews was small; and from their subsequent conduct to our Lord on the cross, they would have been little likely to spread the report of them, even if they had been able. Do the facts then in this case fail to accord with the historical conditions? We learn incidentally from the Synoptics, that the centurion in command was so impressed with the mode of our Lord's death, that he believed in him as a divine character. It is impossible to believe that this has been invented for the purpose of making the incident historically probable.

The account in St. John's Gospel is a blank between the time when our Lord commended his mother to his care and a short time before he expired. Here the Synoptics are particularly full. Is this in accordance with the historical conditions of the case?

Who were the witnesses? A body of women who had removed to a distance from the scene, and the mob. Luke mentions some of our Lord's acquaintance, using the mascu-

line gender; but the whole context makes it plain that the women are the persons principally intended.\*

Where was John? The writer of his Gospel implies, indeed almost asserts, that very shortly after our Lord had commended his mother to his care, he conveyed her home. If so, he would be absent a considerable time. It is expressly stated by the Synoptics that the two women whom he has described as standing with him by the cross had removed to a greater distance when our Lord expired. Mary was not among them. The other women attended the burial. She did not. We may conclude that she had been previously removed from the scene of the crucifixion. The Synoptics therefore and St. John mutually confirm each other.

The author of St. John's Gospel positively asserts his presence at our Lord's death. The narrative just before this took place resumes all the appearance of autoptic testimony.

But how stands the case with the Synoptics? All the three accounts bear the most decisive traces of compilation. The cry reported by Matthew and Mark is stated to have been a loud one; this, therefore, might have been heard by numbers. The scoffs of the multitude and the soldiers are stated with very great variation of detail; this is in exact conformity with the historical conditions. Matthew and Mark represent both malefactors as reviling our Lord; no one but a person standing very near the cross could have known the real state of the facts. Their authorities only knew of a loud cry as preceding his death. Had they known the precise words, it is very unlikely they would have omitted them.

Two utterances of our Lord on the cross could only have been heard by a person standing near; that addressed to the penitent robber, and his commendation of his spirit into his Father's hands. If our Lord's friends had been removed from the vicinity of the cross at the time implied by St. John, they could only have been heard by the soldiers and a small number of the mob. It is to be observed that the same Evangelist who reports

\* Εἰστήκεισαν δὲ πάντες οἱ γνωστοὶ αὐτοῦ μακρόθεν, καὶ γυναῖκες αὐε συνακολουθήσασαι αὐτῷ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, κ.τ.λ. (xxiii. 49.)  
Whoever they were, at all events they were standing at a distance.

the prayer for his murderers, reports these also, while all three are passed over by Matthew and Mark. The same authority which could have supplied him with the one, must have been able to supply him with the others.

We now proceed to notice a few events connected with the resurrection.

It is evident that if the resurrection is not an historical fact, the whole account of it must be a fiction throughout. The structure of the different evangelical narratives makes it clear that if the story is a myth, it is not a single mythic one, but is composed of several woven together, which must have been the work not of a single author, but of many. No part of the New Testament bears more plain indications of having been composed of fragments than the different Synoptical narratives of the resurrection.

The author of the fourth Gospel, while he does not profess to have witnessed the resurrection, asserts that the incidents which he narrates in connection with it came under his immediate notice; and it is also clear that for those which he did not witness himself, he professes that his authority is Mary Magdalene. If, therefore, the resurrection be an event which never happened, the account given of it in this Gospel is not a mythic story, properly so called, but a deliberate coinage of the author's brain. Either the author of this Gospel saw the risen Jesus, or he was an impostor.

We need not take such grounds with respect to the authors of the Synoptic Gospels. They nowhere state that they had seen the Lord. All that can be said is, that they believed that others had seen him. But the stories which they report, and believed to be true, must have been equally fabulous with those in the fourth Gospel.

If the different stories are myths, the evidence that they must have been composed by different authors is indubitable. But although these accounts present a greater number of discrepancies than any others in the Gospel narrative, they mutually illustrate one another in the same manner as is the case with historical facts, the reality of which is attested by a considerable number of witnesses. They present the same points of divergencies and agreements as we find in testimony given in courts of justice.

How, then, stand the historical conditions of the case?



Of the resurrection itself, and of the mode of its accomplishment, there was no witness but the soldiers on guard.

In conformity with this, the account of this miracle differs from every other in the New Testament. We have no description of it. If the whole story was a creation of the imagination, it would have been quite as easy for its inventors to represent a number of persons as witnessing it, and to describe the scene, as they have done with all our Lord's other miracles. But instead of doing this, they have brought a number of women to find nothing but an empty tomb, and who reported that they had seen an angel.

Of the four accounts, that which approaches nearest to a description of the actual event is that of Matthew. But even his cannot be called a description, for he does not represent that any human being saw our Lord actually issue from the tomb. It is worthy of particular observation, that this is the only Evangelist who asserts the actual presence of witnesses at all. These he describes as so terrified that they became almost unconscious. The facts which he narrates are in conformity with this. He mentions only an earthquake and the descent of an angel, at sight of whom the guards are frightened out of their senses. Whoever composed this fiction showed the greatest want of skill in not representing the guards as in full possession of their senses until Jesus himself was seen to issue from the grave. We have often had to notice the high powers of invention with which the originators of the miraculous stories in the Gospels must have been endowed to have framed them as they have. In this instance, however, they must have suddenly failed them.

But if the story be a mythical one, why have we not a good and substantial account of the whole transaction? It is the most important of all the miracles of the Gospels. If they are all inventions, why is this the only one of which we have no description? Of many which are of far less importance the delineation is most graphic and minute.

The absence of this description is intelligible enough, if the event is historical. We have no description of it because no human eye beheld it.

The position of St. John's Gospel in this respect is worthy of particular notice. This Gospel presents us with

a grand account of a resurrection. If miracles are impossible, the story of the resurrection of Lazarus must have been an invention of its author. Our opponents will not deny that he has told the story well. Perhaps they will admit, that with the number of words in which it has been done, it is hardly possible to have described a resurrection better. The characters are all in their proper places. Now, if such a writer thought it necessary to invent so graphic an account of the resurrection of Lazarus, why has he not done as much for the far more important one of his Master? It is evident that he has not failed to do so from want of power. He has shown that he was not ignorant of the importance of proving the actual bodily resurrection of his Master. The person who could invent the fiction which represents our Lord as having invited Thomas to put his finger into the prints of the nails, would have obviated many an objection if he could have persuaded men to believe that a number of friends and foes had actually witnessed Jesus issuing majestically from the tomb. Yet the author of this Gospel has not devoted a single line to a description of the resurrection of our Lord.

But if both resurrections are historical events, this Gospel exactly fulfils the historical conditions which they require. St. John has described the resurrection of Lazarus because he witnessed it. He has given no description of that of our Lord because no human eye beheld it.

It would occupy more space than we can devote to it, if we were to examine minutely the whole narrative of the resurrection with the view of ascertaining its historical value. We can only draw attention to one or two of its more striking features.

In considering this subject, it must be steadily borne in mind, that if it be mythic its discrepancies afford the most undeniable proof that the separate myths must have been composed by mythologists wholly independent of each other. That of Matthew alone contains no less than six fragments which, on the supposition we are discussing, must have been portions of as many mythic stories. Yet each of these, in a manner more or less perfect, dovetails into stories in the other Gospels, which must have been the work of different inventors from those in Matthew.

Although there was no witness of the actual resurrection, those of its subsequent scenes were numerous. The scenes themselves were various, and most of the actors in them under great excitement of mind. These are the historical conditions.

How do our Gospels correspond with them? St. John's Gospel is exactly what it ought to have been, if its author was present at the events which he describes, or heard them from Mary Magdalene.

We have already noticed the fragmentary character of the Synoptic narratives, and the discrepancies which exist in them. This is exactly what we ought to expect if they are compilations of various accounts. But in the midst of the discrepancies they present us with an underlying unity, not apparent on the surface, but which discloses itself after careful investigation. Such unity they ought to preserve, if they are accounts of the same course of events described by different witnesses.

Of these events we must draw attention to the great appearance of our Lord in the evening of the day of the resurrection.

Of this there is one narrative by St. John, clear and distinct. There is another by St. Luke of a considerable minuteness of detail, but evidently derived from a wholly different source from that of St. John. A third but very indistinct account exists in the fragment attached to St. Mark's Gospel. That of Matthew passes it over wholly in silence, as it does with respect to the appearance which, according to St. John, took place in the following week, but of which we catch a very distant echo. These three accounts, which bear the strongest traces of having been derived from independent sources of information, in the midst of considerable disagreements, present points of convergence which are only consistent with their resting on a common historical foundation.

The author of the supplement to St. Mark's Gospel, or if we prefer it, the author of the Gospel itself, wrote under a strong sense of the unbelief of the Apostles. He states that they did not believe Mary Magdalene's report of the resurrection. When our Lord had appeared to two of the disciples as they went into the country, and they had reported the resurrection to the rest; "Neither believed

they them," says he. When our Lord "appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, he reproached them (*ὠνειδισεν*) with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen."

But in Luke the matter is reported thus: "They," that is the two disciples on their return from Emmaus, "found the eleven gathered together, and them which were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared unto Simon." These two disciples, according to Luke, had been expostulated with by our Lord when he met them on the road in the following words: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."\*

But in the account of both Luke and John, when Jesus entered the room where the disciples were assembled, we do not find any indication of his expostulating with them. On the contrary, they both distinctly state that his first words were, "Peace be unto you." St. John, who was present, tells us that, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord;" and the whole account concludes without the smallest indication of the presence of unbelief.

Luke, however, informs us that there were some others present besides the Apostles; and after the first entrance and salutation of Jesus, they were frightened, thinking that they had seen a spirit. Our Lord is then described as mildly expostulating with them, but not as reproaching them. "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" He then, as in John, shows them his hands and his feet, and requests them to handle him in proof that he is no spirit. At this point we have an incident in Luke which strikingly corroborates the historical accuracy of that in John, leaving as it does the evident impression of having been derived from a wholly distinct source of information. John mentions the joy of the Apostles. Luke has the singular but most natural expression, "But when they believed not for joy and wondered." The unbelief mentioned by Luke was not unbelief in the strict sense of that term. They thought the news too good to be true. Accordingly Luke, as in

\* *σκληροκαρδῖαν*, Mark xvi. 14. *βραδεῖς τῇ καρδίᾳ*, Luke xxiv. 25.

the account in John, does not put into our Lord's mouth one word of reproach. On the contrary, he describes him as using fresh means to dispel all possible doubt, in such a manner as to imply that he did not condemn their joyful incredulity as sinful. He asks for meat. They give him some fish and honeycomb. He takes them and eats before them. St. Luke then further confirms St. John's account by another allusion to it, but in terms which most distinctly prove that his source of information was not the same as that of John. Luke says, "Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." But John's description of the same event is this, "He breathed on them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

The only reference made by St. John to our Lord's expostulating with any of the Apostles is that which took place at his meeting with them in the following week, when Thomas was in their company.

But what are we to do with the account in the supplement of St. Mark? It contains two assertions; first, that they did not believe the report of Cleopas and his companion; second, that our Lord, when he appeared just after, upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart for not believing the reports of those who had seen him.

This portion of St. Mark's Gospel, which there is strong evidence for believing not to be from the pen of the Evangelist himself, presents the indications of being a very distant report of the facts. As such, although it is literally inconsistent with the statements of Luke and John, it affords them a substantial corroboration.

Luke gives us two incidents which are beyond doubt the foundation of Mark's account. A certain form of unbelief actually existed in the room, but it was the unbelief of joy. He further informs us that there were two persons then present, Cleopas and his companion, whom our Lord had addressed in these words, "O fools and slow of heart,"—of which the expression used by the author of this supplement to St. Mark is not an incorrect description: "He upbraided them" (*ὤνειδισεν*). The author considered that these words had been addressed not to them only, but to the whole body of disciples in the room.

But the author of the fragment mentions some of the



Apostles not believing a report of the resurrection made by persons who had actually seen our Lord. These persons he considers to have been Cleopas and his companion.

John supplies us with an incident which will show how this indistinct account originated, and of which it is the evident echo. There was one unbelieving Apostle, though he was not present at the meeting in question; but at one which took place on the following week. He had declined to believe the testimony of his companions who had seen our Lord, among whom were Cleopas and his friend. On the occasion of the second meeting our Lord addressed him in terms of mild reproach.

Now it is impossible to believe that the substantial accounts in Luke and John could have been written for the purpose of clearing up the obscurities contained in the supplement of Mark. Yet although they are perfectly independent of each other, they effect this. It should be observed that neither account does this if taken by itself; but by a careful comparison of the two we are enabled to account for and explain an inaccurate statement. This can only be accomplished when the foundation on which the several accounts rests is historical.

There is another similar statement in St. Matthew's Gospel, which can only be cleared up in the same manner. The author notices none of our Lord's appearances at Jerusalem except one which took place on the morning of the resurrection. If we suppose the author to have been the Apostle, he has taken no notice of two appearances of our Lord at which St. John asserts that he was present. In place of them he tells us of an appearance in Galilee.

At this meeting the presence of Matthew is one of the historical conditions of the case. The author of the Gospel tells it in these words, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them, and when they saw him they worshipped him: but some doubted." (xxviii. 16, 17.)

The only natural meaning which these words can bear is, not that some of the eleven Apostles doubted whether the person whom they saw advancing towards them was Jesus, but that their doubts were of such a nature as to have extended to the reality of his resurrection; and that the

doubt, whatever was its actual degree, was entertained by Apostles on this occasion.

But if the Gospels of Luke and John are narratives of historical facts, it is impossible that any of the eleven could have remained in unbelief.

Independent historical statements, however, help us to clear the difficulty. We learn from an epistle of St. Paul, that more than five hundred persons were present at this meeting. This affords abundant room for the doubts in question. There is no difficulty in the fact that many among so large a number entertained doubts, although it is impossible that such doubts could have been shared in by the eleven.

The account in Matthew, therefore, is an indistinct account of the historical fact incidentally mentioned by St. Paul. We learn also from another source of information that doubts had existed in the minds of Apostles, though on a wholly different occasion.

It is impossible to believe that St. Paul invented the incident mentioned by him for the purpose of throwing light on the indistinct account contained in this Gospel. Had such been the case, he would certainly have mentioned the presence of Apostles, and stated that the unbelief was not entertained by them, but by the multitude, who, from the nature of the case, must have had a more distant view of our Lord's person. If, on the other hand, the incident in Matthew had grown out of St. Paul's account, it never would have assumed the form which it bears in this Gospel.

The peculiar form of these incidents in all four Evangelists, which we have just been considering, proves that we are in the presence of historic truth. It would be utterly impossible for statements which are based on nothing but a number of independent fictions to bear this form.

A similar course of reasoning may be applied to every portion of the parallel narrative ; but it is impossible to do more here than exhibit its general bearing. It should be observed, however, that the evidence which it affords of the historical character of the Gospels is cumulative. Each successive indication of it does not stand separate by itself, but adds weight to the mass. Its force depends on the combined gravitation of the whole. We shall also observe, that only two of the miraculous stories are common to St. John and

the Synoptics, viz., the feeding of the five thousand and the stilling of the storm. The comparison of the different accounts will show that the indications of historical reality with which the fourfold account supplies us are of a most commanding character; and that the phenomena presented by them are utterly inconsistent with the assumption of their mythic origin. Owing to the length of the argument, it is impossible to give even an abridgment of it.

We must offer one or two very brief observations on the discourses. How have they been transmitted?

The most singular variations and agreements of the parallel discourses are, we apprehend, only consistent with one assumption respecting them, viz., that they had been for many years handed down in an oral form, or in a form partly oral and partly written. We think that this view of the case is indubitable; and that their variations have originated by means of frequent repetition in the course of their transmission for purposes of instruction. It makes no difference in this respect whether we view the discourses as an account of the utterances of our Lord, or as fictitious ones set forth for the purpose of being attributed to him. Even if they are assumed to be the latter, they must have had some original form out of which our present triplicate, or at times duplicate, version of them has grown. We apprehend that it is impossible for this to have originated in any other source than a course of oral transmission. If such is the case, the transmission of these discourses, and their preservation in their present form, constitute one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of man.

The transmission of discourses orally is an exceedingly difficult operation. Unless some most powerful cause is in operation to prevent it, they lose in the course of time the impress of the mind of the original speaker. Foreign additions get mixed up with them. The general conception undergoes transformation in passing through the minds of those by whom they must have been handed down, and receives the stamp of their several minds. This would be pre-eminently the case when the subject matter of such discourses as have been attributed to our Lord was religion and morality. In the course of a few years the identity of even the words must perish.

One great teacher of mankind, like our Lord, has written

nothing—the philosopher Socrates. His whole life was one continued course of teaching and talking. This was his sole employment. He had many disciples. They were men of intelligence. There was nothing to prevent them from making notes of what he said. Probably this was done by some of his more devoted admirers, and he had many. But what has become of the discourses of the Philosopher?

We have two professed versions of them from the pen of two of his disciples, wrought up into a large number of supposed dialogues. One of these is the work of Plato, the other of Xenophon. In the one of these Socrates is made to Platonize, in the other to Xenophontize. Learned men have generally supposed that the latter are the nearest approach to the actual utterances of the philosopher; but although either Plato or Xenophon may report sentiments more or less near to those which Socrates may have uttered, it is not too much to say that it is highly improbable that ten consecutive lines in either are a correct representation of what passed from his lips. Even if we take hold of any single sentiment which they have attributed to him, it is impossible to obtain an assurance that that sentiment was actually held by the philosopher. Although we have the works of Plato and Xenophon in our hands, we cannot feel sure that we know for certain any particular tenet which he positively taught. In fact, the opinion is growing that his method was far more negative than positive. He probably believed in the unity of God, which belief he united with an outward conformity to the religion of his country; in the immortality of the soul, which he probably mixed up with a doctrine of transmigration; and was impelled by a deep sense of duty. Having said this, we have said all. His influence was a mighty and a real one; but his discourses have perished, though he lived in an historical age. But how has it fared with the other great teacher of men, who never became an author; and who, if the mythic theory be correct, instead of an enlightened body of disciples, must have been surrounded by persons of unbounded credulity?

Of his discourses we have three reports set forth by three disciples, not immediately on their delivery, but after many years of oral transmission. These discourses bear

the stamp, not of the mind of the disciples, nor even of those who must have assisted in their oral transmission, but of the mind of the Master. We discover in them no foreign elements. They belong exclusively to one type of thought and feeling, while they present a marked difference from every other which has been invented by man. We discern in them no indications of the impress of different schools of thought, or of the presence of a disciple who thought that he could improve on the teaching of his Master. While their diversities proclaim the many hands which have been engaged in their transmission, they do not introduce one additional element of moral or religious truth. The actual identity of words is preserved to a great extent, and in such a manner as to make the Gospels an unique phenomenon in the history of man.

So strong is the evidence that the Gospels contain a substantially correct account of the utterances of our Lord, that it is admitted by many of those who deny the historical character of the facts. Some of them even allow that many of the expressions attributed to him were actually uttered by his lips.

It is needless further to enlarge on the difficulty with which the transmission of a body of discourses, such as are contained in the Gospels, must have been attended, under the circumstances of the primitive Church. However hard it is to conceive of the possibility of such a transaction, we have them in the form in which we read them in the Synoptics.

Whence then the different fate of Jesus and of Socrates?

One assumption only will account for the difference, viz., that the portraiture of the Jesus of the Evangelists is the delineation of an historical reality.

The son of Sophroniscus was a man like ourselves. He was a great man. He excited a great enthusiasm in the hearts of his followers. He died a martyr to his opinions, and he died as a noble man should die. Men of high literary powers and noble instincts revered his memory, but they felt that he was a man as they were. He had never pretended to hold himself as their superior, but he engaged in common with them in the search for truth. They loved him; but they felt for him no worship. No awful distance separated the disciple from the teacher.



He put in no claim to rule the conscience. No divine beam of light irradiated his character. They, therefore, felt entitled to discuss his opinions, to improve on them and to modify them. If they are to be believed, he had enjoined them to do so, and even to combat his dearest hopes in his dying hour. He never attempted to make the moral and the spiritual life of others centre in his own person. Their reverence was due not to him, but to truth. His followers, therefore, felt themselves entitled to set forth their own opinions in his name, and to attribute utterances to him which he never spake and opinions which he never held. His discourses have perished, and the positive doctrines which he taught have passed into the regions of uncertainty, although he lived in the very midst of one of the most active developments of the intellect of man.

But if the Gospels are historical, the son of Mary put in different claims. He taught like one who was Son of God and Son of Man. He declared himself to be not only a teacher of the truth, but the truth itself. He declared that he had a right to bind the conscience. He announced himself as the centre of morality. A moral and spiritual radiance and attractive power issued from his person. He, too, drew around him a multitude of disciples; but although he united himself with them by tenderer sympathies than those which united Socrates with his followers, he never exhibited himself on a common level with them. He not only died a martyr's death, he not only died for truth, but he died for man. His followers believed that he rose again, and that he claimed not to be their equal but their Lord.

Each of the followers of our Lord, therefore, felt that their Master stood at an immeasurable height above them. They treasured up his words with the profoundest reverence in their memories, felt a sacred awe at the thought of polluting their holiness by impressing on them the stamp of their own opinions, and watched over their transmission with the most jealous care. They enthroned the utterances of Jesus in an inner temple, into which every faithful follower felt that it would be profane to obtrude his presence. Successive disciples felt for him the same admiration. The result has been that while the utterances of the philosopher-martyr have perished, those of the

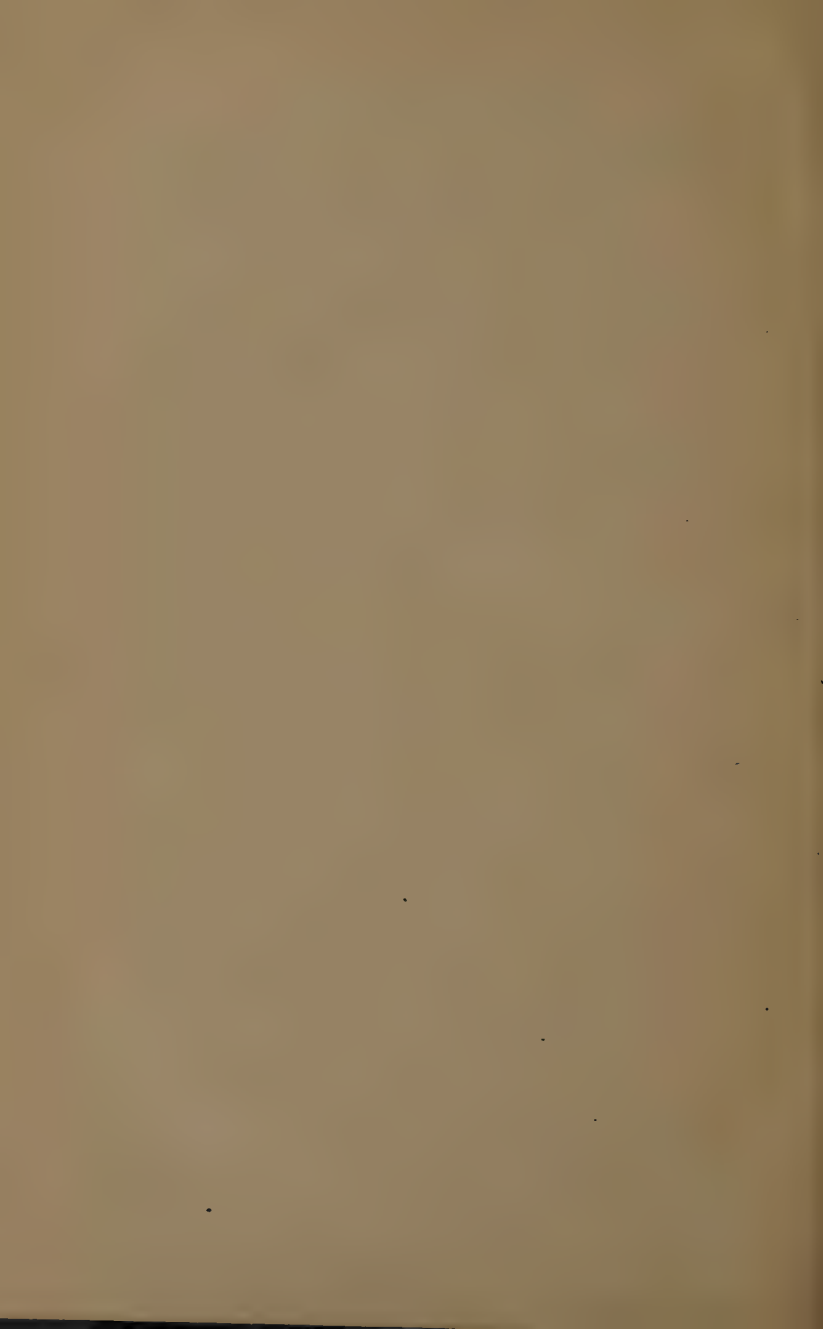
Galilean peasant were after an interval of years reduced to writing by his followers, and are esteemed as oracles of superhuman wisdom by the most refined races of mankind, to which they vainly essay to approach after a lapse of more than eighteen centuries from his death.

If the historical Jesus had been a purely human one, the same fate would have overtaken his utterances as has befallen those of the other teacher who disdained the work of authorship. Every circumstance by which he was surrounded favoured the transmission of the words of the latter, and was adverse to the preservation of those of the former. But Socrates had no Boswell.

Yet the words of Jesus will be held in everlasting remembrance. Is this in conformity with the historical conditions of the case? Not if he were a human Jesus; but if he were the Jesus of the Evangelists, that fact is an adequate solution of the phenomenon.

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